Football FA Cup fifth round: Aston Villa 0 Coventry City 1

Coventry enjoy their Villa Park outing

Jeremy Alexander

WEMBLEY would give a lot for weather on May 16 like last Saturday's. On current showing it would not mind Coventry, too, for the Cup final. The Sky Blues are playing on cloud nine; Villa simply under a cloud — which is why Coventry, at the 27th attempt, won at Villa Park for the first time. It has taken 62 years. Just now they believe in themselves more than hoodoos.

Coventry's Cup record since they won it in 1987 has also been wretched. They are normally out before the crocuses, let alone the daffodils. This will be their first quarter-final for 11 years, and they have reached it with first-time victories over Liverpool, Derby and Villa, the first and last of them away.

The Eton Boating Song is their traditional signature tune and they all pulled together for Gordon Strachan, the touchline cox whose passion brought a referee's rebuke for overstepping his territory. By contrast Brian Little stood pensive and inflexible in his winter waterproofs — and Savo Milosevic was not in the vicinity.

Last Sunday, the chairman Doug Ellis said his door is open to the discontented Yugoslav, who has not played for a month. Little could do with peacemaking — without Dwight Yorke, he was virtually obliged to stick with Stan Collymore, not that he has shown sign of dropping him anyway.

What started as faith in his ability to get the best from a wayward talent is looking like self-defeating obstinacy. In 30 starts Collymore, all $10.5 million of Villa's record buy, has scored five goals, none significant. An advert for Villa's sponsors shows him standing over a PC with the legend "The quietest in the Premiership".

Villain of the piece . . . Gareth Southgate gets to grips with Coventry's Darren Huckerby during the Midlands derby at Villa Park
PHOTOGRAPH: DAVID DAVIES

His unconcern at losing possession was almost defiant and ultimately fatal. After 70 minutes his loose first touch set Coventry off again on a move which ended with George Boateng — a snip at $375,000 — cutting in from the right past Alan Wright, Gareth Southgate and Ugo Ehiogu before drawing another elastic save from Mark Bosnich. The ball ran to Viorel Moldovan, Coventry's record buy at $5 million, who tapped in his first City goal.

Villa could have been four down by then, three to Trond Soltvedt. Bosnich denied him with a half-scorpion, then Julian Joachim cleared off the line. Soltvedt and Boateng were conspicuous in support of their front two and Strachan's son Gavin, making his first start in virtually a reserve midfield, contributed fully. Dion Dublin was naturally at the heart of it — at both ends — going into defence when Moldovan came on for Richard Shaw.

In World Cup terms the Romanian will have noted how Southgate was discomforted by Dublin in the air and by Darren Huckerby's pace. Villa, newly aligned in 4-4-2, could have used a sweeper, but Little is thinking rigidly under pressure. The team reflected their boss, as Coventry did theirs: the one predictable, the other perky.

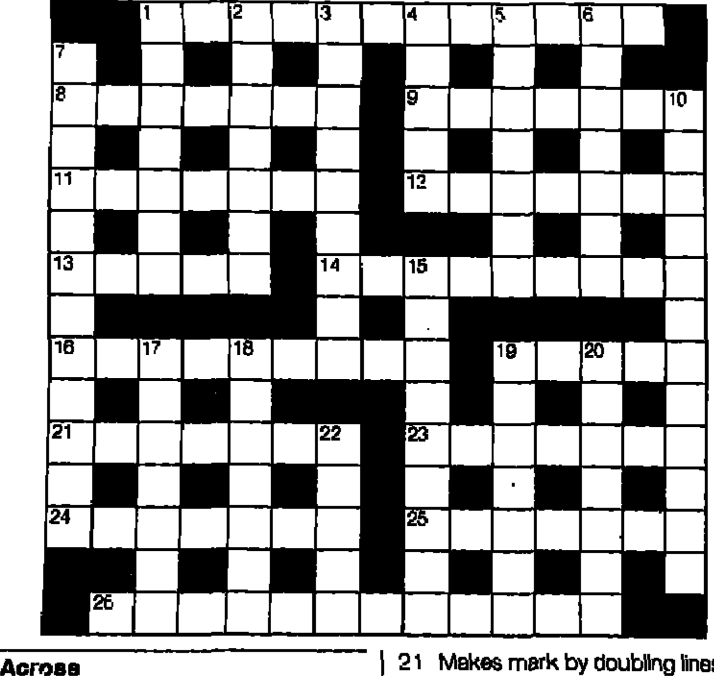
Strachan said of Moldovan: "He's been getting a little bit twitchy on the bench. He's concerned he won't be able to impress the Romanian coach in our reserves. But he's intelligent, and he understands our front two have been playing out of their skins."

Little was late for his press conference, but honest when he arrived. "Coventry were better than us," he said. "Without Bosnich it could have been a lot more than one-nil."

Southgate said: "When you are going through a bad time, you look at each other and pick things up together." They got no further than the looking. Coventry meanwhile can look to Wembley and the hope of jolly boating weather.

Sixth-round draw: Arsenal or Crystal Palace v West Ham or Blackburn Rovers; Coventry City v Sheffield United; Leeds United v Wimbledon or Wolverhampton W; Newcastle United v Manchester United or Barnsley

Cryptic crossword *by Janus*



Across

1 Strong board may be needed to make it (4,8)
8 Essayist on the ball in bed perhaps (7)
9 The forerunner of that (7)
11 Original character (7)
12 Mail delivered in answer to pop group (7)
13 Sulphur found in openings for air-intakes (5)
14 The most able 150 get to the summit (9)
16 Asset possibly involving danger to stars (9)
19 Saucy-sounding painter (5)
21 Makes mark by doubling lines on pitch (7)
23 Ship that will take the motorist's luggage? (7)
24 Bird's egg in roll (7)
25 Order lone revolutionary to infiltrate military group (7)
26 Features of some British cars abroad (7,5)

Down

1 Materials produced if crabs are crushed (7)
2 Jests at mass meetings (7)
3 Protective measures for lifeless hair? (9)
4 Pin said to be for a surplice (5)
5 Unfruitful rest perhaps on French island (7)
6 Perform in theatre works by Lawrence (7)
7 UFO appearing in the kitchen perhaps (6,6)
10 Lenten meditations for the nimble-witted? (4,8)
15 Quarter given to Oriental chap outside London area (9)
17 He painted "Bond, the Explorer" (7)
18 Tore set apart as a favour (7)
19 Dog-trumpet singer found (7)
20 Sulla aspiring to half-pay as a member (7)
22 Shoot a young person (5)

Last week's solution

F	A	I	R	T	O	M	I	D	D	L	I	N	G	
L		M		R		A		U		Y		O		L
A	P	P	R	A	I	S	A	L		R	A	D	I	I
G		E		D		S		C		I		O		T
L	E	A	V	E		A	G	I	N	C	O	U	R	T
I		C		S		C		E				B		L
E	P	H	E	M	E	R	A		B	L	I	T	H	E
U				A		E		B		O				C
T	H	O	R	N	Y		B	E	Q	U	E	A	T	H
E		C				B		N		I		S		I
N	O	T	A	T	H	I	N	G		S	I	S	A	L
A		O		R		T		H		I		E		D
N	O	B	L	E		T	R	A	F	A	L	G	A	R
T		E		N		E		Z		N		A		E
	F	R	A	T	E	R	N	I	S	A	T	I	O	N

Rugby Union Newcastle 43 Harlequins 15

Newcastle hit top form

Michael Prestage

NEWCASTLE regained their position at the top of the Premiership table, so presumptuously taken by Saracens last Saturday, with a six-try display that swept aside Harlequins and left no doubt who the champions apparent are halfway through the season.

Newcastle's coach Steve Bates described the difficulty in preparing eight players mentally drained after international matches the previous weekend, but it was difficult to discern any ill-effects.

Two years ago Quins won this fixture. It is a measure of the revolution undertaken at Newcastle that they are in a different class from the Londoners.

Once the home pack had taken control, the visitors were blitzed in a first-half display that saw 31 points rattled up, including three tries in five minutes just before the interval. Quins' first-half reply was a Rob Liley penalty.

Newcastle began slowly and but for a series of dropped passes which thwarted Quins' attacking ambitions the visitors might have snatched an early lead. With the Newcastle line-out secure and the pack scrummaging well the forwards' irresistible driving rugby gave the backs ample opportunity to prosper.

Andy Keast, Quins' coach, said the supremacy of the home pack was decisive. "We played well for 25 minutes but then their power took over."

After 16 minutes the prop Paul Van-Zandvliet was held up on the Quins' line, and from the ensuing scrum Newcastle forwards almost drove over three times before the wing Jim Naylor scored the opening try.

But the three tries in that glorious spell before the interval finished the contest. The first came when a poor kick by Quins' full-back Jim Staples was returned with interest. When the flanker Pat Lam was finally tackled the ball was quickly recycled and Tony Underwood scored.

Minutes later, when wing Dan Luger was caught in his in-goal area he conceded a five-metre scrum, and Newcastle's captain Dean Ryan had a simple pushover try. On the stroke of half-time Alan Tait kept the scoreboard ticking over.

Early in the second half Underwood added his second try to increase the lead. Two tries by Quins just before the hour were a mere blip in proceedings. Newcastle spent the final quarter laying siege to the Quins line before Martin Shaw scored on the stroke of time.

The Guardian Weekly
Vol 158, No 9
Week ending March 1, 1998
The Washington Post · Le Monde

Clinton puts Iraq on trial over deal

Martin Kettle in Washington, Ian Black in London and Julian Borger in Baghdad

THE United States on Monday gave its tentative approval to a deal with Iraq struck by the United Nations secretary-general, Kofi Annan, but insisted that the use of force would be automatic if Saddam Hussein again obstructed weapons inspectors.

President Clinton, backed by his ally Tony Blair, said that US acceptance of the agreement was conditional upon the full implementation of UN resolutions.

"I hope today's agreement will prove to be the step forward that we have been looking for," he said in a broadcast from the Oval Office at the White House. "But the proof is in the testing."

Mr Clinton described the agreement secured by Mr Annan at the weekend as "a written commitment to provide immediate, unrestricted and unconditional access to the Unscom [United Nations special commission] weapons inspectors to all suspect sites in Iraq". There would be repeat visits to the sites and no deadlines, he added.

Mr Annan was set to present the deal to the full UN Security Council on Tuesday. He expressed confidence that the agreement would win international backing.

Mr Annan believes he obtained unfettered access to suspected weapons sites by offering Iraq a vaguely-worded promise of "light at the end of the tunnel" — accelerated inspections leading to the eventual lifting of sanctions.

"The accord which we have just signed is quite sound and, even if there are discussions at the Security Council I do not expect they will be too tough, but you never know," he said.

Mr Clinton said: "All Americans should have a positive reaction to the fact that we have a commitment. If fully implemented — and that is the big if — this commitment will allow Unscom to fulfil its mission."

Claiming that his threats of military action had been instrumental in achieving the diplomatic outcome, he said: "Once again we have seen that diplomacy must be backed by strength and resolve."

He made it clear that US troops would remain in the Gulf region "in force" to ensure that Iraq carried out its side of the agreement. "I intend to keep our forces at high levels of preparation," he said.

Mr Clinton stressed that his acceptance of the deal was not unconditional, saying: "There are issues that still need to be clarified to our satisfaction and details that need to be worked over."

Later, however, he told a questioner: "My instinct is that we can resolve those things to our satisfaction."

The US president revealed that he had agreed that senior diplomats appointed by Mr Annan would accompany the Unscom inspectors to the eight disputed presidential palaces which were the source of the confrontation. "What really matters is Iraq's compliance," he said. "Not what it says but what it does."

But even before Mr Annan left Baghdad doubts about the durability of the deal were growing.

The state-run Iraqi News Agency trumpeted an Iraqi victory and claimed that the presidential sites at the heart of the crisis could only be inspected under "specific criteria".

But speaking in Paris, on his way back to the UN in New York, Mr Annan said: "President Saddam and the Iraqi government accept that we can visit all eight palaces. Tomorrow."

Kofi Annan, UN secretary-general (left), and Tariq Aziz, Iraq's deputy prime minister, sign the agreement



Mr Annan said there were "no time limits or deadlines" in the agreement, but added: "I think it is important that we do our work in a reasonable period."

Mr Clinton consulted Mr Blair and the French president, Jacques Chirac, with the two agreeing to implement the accord as soon as possible. He also planned to speak to President Boris Yeltsin of Russia.

Mr Blair said: "It is absolutely essential that we are not back in this position in a few weeks' or a few months' time."

And he confirmed that Britain would be seeking a tough, new Security Council resolution giving the UN the right to respond "by whatever means necessary" if the Iraqi dictator broke his word. "I think what is very, very important is that we have this new resolution that makes it absolutely clear we are not going out into some long drawn-out diplomatic game again," he said.

It is essential we are not back in this position in a few weeks' or months' time — *Tony Blair*

Reaction among ordinary Iraqis to the deal was muted, with many saying they would reserve rejoicing for the day sanctions imposed after Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait are ended.

Leaders of the exiled Iraqi opposition, who were dealt a blow by the deal, said on Monday that President Saddam had outfoxed Washington in the crisis. The deal would only prolong the suffering of the Iraqi people, they added.

"The United States has made serious miscalculations twice — once in 1991 when they didn't finish Saddam, and now because they strongly and wrongly believed that Saddam would not back down. He surprised them and climbed down," said Wafiq Samoraei, the London-based former head of Iraqi military intelligence. "We have to admit that Saddam Hussein has achieved a victory which we hope will be temporary," he said.

Speaking at a press conference with Mr Annan, Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, who signed the accord, fiercely denied that the 11th-hour deal amounted to a climb-down in the face of threats to use force.

"It was diplomacy. Wise, balanced, United Nations world diplomacy that enabled us to reach this agreement. Not sabre-rattling," he said.

Mr Annan responded: "You can do a lot with diplomacy, but of course you can do a lot more with diplomacy backed up with firmness and force."

The remark was widely seen as a nod towards the build-up of US forces in the Gulf.

Washington Diary, page 6
Comment, page 12
Washington Post, page 13

Middle East has no cause to rejoice

OPINION
Martin Woollacott

THE great wave of relief which circled the globe on Monday as it became clear that Kofi Annan had managed a deal with Saddam Hussein to avert an American attack on Iraq ought to have been followed by a great wave of shame. The deal has been done with a uniquely evil man, it gives him much of what he wants, and it probably consigns the Iraqi people to many more years under the most depraved of dictatorships. It may not even head off bombing, which could still happen, sooner or later. It will have profoundly dangerous effects in the Middle East, among other things probably setting off a more intense regional race to acquire weapons of mass destruction.

This is not to say that an American attack, if it had come or if it still comes, would not have the same or worse results. Assuming the bombs do not fall, we will have avoided a bad war only in order to make a bad peace. All the powers concerned bear a share of the blame for the failures and mistakes which, over the years, led inexorably to a situation where the world was faced with the dismal choice between the two.

The United States was at the same time over-ambitious in its Middle Eastern objectives and lacking in will and competence in carrying them out. It proposed to contain both Iraq and Iran, but succeeded in containing neither. It proposed to change the regime in Iraq, but vitiated this by its preference for a military success. It proposed to bring about a peace settlement between Israelis and Palestinians, but has

continued on page 3

Austria	AS30	Malta	60c
Belgium	BF80	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK17	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 14	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 500	Sweden	SK 19
Italy	L 3,500	Switzerland	SF 3.80

Only Saddam will benefit from air strikes on Iraq

IT WOULD seem that the United States and its allies are again conveniently ignoring the fact that unilateral military action is contrary to the United Nations charter and illegal under international law.

What do they think air strikes on Iraq will achieve?

Any attack is likely to consolidate support within Iraq for Saddam and will be unlikely to force him to comply with UN directives. Any further weapons inspections after military action seem unlikely so, once again, violence will have achieved little.

We all agree that Saddam is a power-hungry, heartless dictator, but there are others as ruthless as him. The problem many of us have is how the West decides which dictators should be supplied with arms, and traded with, and which should be vilified.

Why, for example, did the West condone Indonesia's invasion of East Timor and the genocide that followed, and yet choose to move at lightning speed, rightfully, to repulse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait? We all know why. Oil.

It is completely unacceptable for Iraq to harbour any means of mass destruction, and it seems unbelievable that after seven long years these weapons have not been accounted for. It is also wrong for the UN to turn a blind eye to the nuclear weapons acquired by Israel — an equal threat to peace in the region.

As always it is the civilians, especially children, who suffer most in times of conflict and trade sanctions. The statistics are horrifying. According to Unicef, between August 1990 and August 1997, 1,211,000 children died of embargo-related causes. We in New Zealand should be mindful of the leading role we played in determining those same sanctions. The bombardment of Iraq during "Desert Storm" killed an estimated 150,000 more children and devastated Iraq's water, power and sewerage systems. A 1991 UN report described Iraq as "a country bombed back to a pre-industrial age".

The UN has made a mockery of its own Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The hypocrisy is sickening.

It is futile to place the blame on Saddam, harping on and on that if he were to conform, these deaths could have been avoided. The hard facts are that Iraq is a military dictatorship with a woeful human rights record of its own. Saddam's army is in full control. Dissent equals death. What exactly are the people to do?

John Wheeler,
Taupo, New Zealand

WHY strike Baghdad, and why now? Yes, Iraq has used and threatened to use weapons of mass destruction, but so have the United States and others. Saddam Hussein's record is one of carefully calculated reason (as when he was deterred from using such weapons during the Gulf war). Yes, Saddam is a murderous thug, but so is Syria's Assad, Israel's Sharon and all too many others in the region.

Saddam's attempts to circumvent UN resolutions is said to justify murderous air strikes (by a power that arrogates all rights of interpretation and judgment), while others' similarly condemned occupations (Syria's of Lebanon's Bekaa valley and Israel's of the Gaza, West Bank and Golan) remain unthreatened and unremarked.

The partisan and selective application of "law" offends the very notion of law. Law must be generic and impartial, at least in principle, and not based on whim, personal need or spite. Applying laws only to "them" and not "us" smacks of what we rightly accuse Saddam of. The *new* world order looks very old indeed!

(Prof) Carl G Jacobson,
Ottawa, Canada

THE majority of Arab states were persuaded to join the anti-Iraq coalition in 1991 by the promise of a new world order in which the Palestinians would be liberated from occupation. With the Oslo peace process now ground to a halt, there is no Arab support for renewed attacks on Baghdad. Tony Blair's support of the American hard line can only discredit Britain's standing in this region.

Robin Yassin-Kassab, Jed Williams,
Damascus, Syria

Labour pains at the euro's birth

ATTEMPTS by Messrs Brittan, Santer and de Silguy to re-open the argument about Britain's participation in the single European currency are interpreted by Martin Walker as evidence of their wanting the strong pound to join in order to buttress the euro (February 8).

These gentlemen, I believe, are worried that 1) the euro, introduced at a high rate of interest, governed by strict German stability criteria, and managed by the Bundesbank-like European Central Bank in Frankfurt, will, on the contrary, be very attractive to investors and thus as strong as, if not stronger than, the deutschmark; 2) this will make exports from all the European Union countries more expensive and thus less competitive on the world, and British, markets; and 3) combined with the high interest rate, this will only put more people out of work in those very countries where unemployment has already reached politically explosive proportions.

No. Britain would be well advised to wait and see. Maybe, once the euro is born and bought, and the British pound reverts to a more export-friendly level, British exporters will be rejoicing while their euro-competitors can only gnash their teeth and curse the day the single currency was conceived.

John C Constable,
Hamburg, Germany

Learn to grow old gracefully

DR ROBIN HOLLIDAY (February 15) takes Tim Radford to task for overemphasising the role of dividing cells in ageing. He is right and wrong. The enigma of ageing is that it is a multifactoral process. As in cars with built-in obsolescence, all systems fail at about the same time.

The problem in ageing is deviation from the "steady-state". This means both the loss of structures that are not replaced (such as telomere ends as emphasised by Radford), and the accumulation of components that are not removed, such as age pigments in non-dividing cells (emphasised by Holliday). The evidence favours both mechanisms.

Extracellular processes, too, participate in the ageing process. These include cholesterol transport with consequent loss of vitality, and the cross-linking of collagen and proteins of the lens of the eye. These accumulations produce the shortness of breath, peering gaze, loss of flexibility, creaking joints, and the wrinkled, flaccid skin that await most of us.

Science will be able to slow some of these events. Meanwhile we had better learn to wear these badges of survival proudly, and respect them in others. The only way to avoid them is to die young.

Allan Davison,
Vancouver, Canada

Students denied their birthright

DONALD MacLEOD, describing the possible funding crisis facing British universities (February 15), states that "foreign students have in effect been subsidising their British classmates".

But, as we have recently discovered, British students resident abroad who are classified as foreign by the Government are also subsidising their British classmates. Our daughter, who has had her secondary and undergraduate university education in New Zealand and who has been offered a postgraduate place in Britain, is required to produce a guarantee signed by our solicitor that she has the funds to complete the course for which she has been accepted.

This invidious distinction between British students on the basis of parental residence is both discriminatory and short-sighted. It does little to encourage such students to regard themselves as the British citizens that in fact they are.

Penelope Kempthorne,
Nelson, New Zealand

All work makes Jack worried

I ENJOYED Maureen Freely's article (British feminists make their mark, January 11). However, I am disappointed that the current wave of feminists have not taken a more holistic view. Freely says, "No one is pretending there is a huge male interest in the politics of the life/work balance at present", and suggests society had better watch out for these new feminists who "are far more radical than their predecessors".

This ignores the growing debate about the conflict between being a worthwhile human being and competing in the world of business. For example, Charles Handy's latest book The Hungry Spirit is subtitled, "Beyond Capitalism, a quest for purpose in the modern world". Men are just as concerned as women about their way of life. After all, most are committed to being the breadwinner of last resort for the family — in other words, work is the means to the end of supporting the family. Surely women and men together should be questioning the current way of life, and challenging the accepted norms of the work place.

Present norms could be regarded as a conspiracy by Big Business. In reality most women and men are family people at heart, not the yuppies in their 20s profiled as the role model by advertising.

Roger Hodgson
Kathmandu, Nepal

Briefly

NORMAN STONE'S review of Michael Ignatieff's The Warrior's Honour (State of the nation, February 15) displays the kind of casual ignorance that seems unfortunately typical of Brits writing about Canadian matters. "Eskimo", and in particular "Red Indian", are terms from antiquated children's adventure stories that less good-humoured folk would consider offensive rather than just risible.

Aboriginal Canadians constitute peoples, not "tribes". Would the Scots appreciate being referred to as a tribe? But more important, the "misdeeds" for which the Canadian government recently, and belatedly, apologised to its aboriginal citizens were not committed "centuries ago"; many of the victims are not only still alive, but still in only their middle years.

Nigel H Richardson,
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

STEPHEN BATES reports from Brussels that English is the most commonly taught language in Europe (February 22). Looking just at Europe, this fact would indeed be difficult to reconcile with Britain's modest size, peripheral location and her relatively limited role in Europe's history, trade, and affairs.

What students all over Europe (and around the world) are learning is American, not English. Even if most of European teachers still stick to RP as their canon of pronunciation, the demand for English has nothing to do with Britain. It is generated by American dominance in politics, commerce, science and popular culture.

W H Trzaska,
Jyvaskyla, Finland

IT WAS disappointing to hear Elaine Showalter cheering Natasha Walter's discovery of Margaret Thatcher as "the great unsung heroine of British feminism" (Femme de siècle, February 8). Should we celebrate power without regard to its use? Feminism then would seem simply to affirm the myths it hoped to contest. I'm of the same generation as Walter, but I can't think of any of my contemporaries who could identify with this "new dawn" of made-it feminism.

Eleanor Porter,
Hong Kong

WHEN and by whom was it decided that the new century would be referred to as "two thousand" and not "twenty hundred" and thereafter just "twenty"? In three years' time, should we not be in the year "twenty O one"? We don't say the Battle of Hastings took place in "one thousand and sixty six" or that Queen Victoria died in "one thousand, nine hundred and one".

Sue Sulley,
Maidstone, Kent

The **Guardian Weekly**

March 1, 1998 Vol 158 No 9

Annual subscription rates are £49 United Kingdom; £55 Europe inc. Eire, USA and Canada; £63 Rest of World.
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Hindu nationalists in fury over 'coup'

Suzanne Goldenberg in Sambhal, northern India

MOUNTED police stood watch on the banks of the Ganges, and soldiers trained Jeep-mounted machine-guns along deserted roads in the badlands of north India on Monday, in the second round of the country's general elections.

Eight people were killed in poll clashes, six in the state of Bihar. But the violence — on a relatively modest scale for Bihar — was eclipsed by developments in neighbouring Uttar Pradesh last Saturday, when the state government of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was felled in a political coup.

In Sambhal, the local preserve of the Hindu nationalists' most formidable enemy, infuriated BJP supporters hurled bricks from rooftops to stop rivals reaching polling stations. Polling was interrupted at several booths after party agents came to blows.

The government collapsed after its allies — who had defected from their own parties only months earlier — walked out of the coalition. Within hours, the state governor swore in a rebel government, outraging the BJP's prime ministerial candidate, Atal Bihar Vajpayee.

Mr Vajpayee threatened to starve himself to death in protest against "a midnight conspiracy to influence voting in the state". But he was able to call off his hunger strike after the high court in Allahabad overruled the dismissal on Monday. However, the court said the reinstated chief minister, Kalyan Singh, may still have to undergo a confidence test in the state legislature later this week.

The past five years have seen intense polarisation in Uttar Pradesh, with Muslims, lower-caste Hindus — including the politically ascendant Yadav caste — and Dalits (formerly "Untouchables") lined up against the BJP. Although some in Sambhal mourned the BJP's fall, it was cause for celebration for supporters of its main local foe, the leader of the Samajwadi party, Mulayam Singh Yadav.

Mr Yadav, a former wrestler, was defence minister in the outgoing United Front government. These elections are widely expected to produce a fractured verdict and, if the numbers favour the United Front, he would be a contender for prime minister.

So hungry was the BJP for the defeat of the Samajwadi party leader that they lured away a local strongman, D P Yadav (no relation), who has been implicated in several serious crimes and was for many years in the service of the Samajwadi party leader.

Anticipating a showdown, the administration had sealed all routes to Sambhal and posted guards on the Ganges. Hundreds of border and paramilitary forces were put on standby, and bureaucrats with swagger sticks patrolled with truckloads of riot police.

Candidates were forbidden to travel with the entourages that are *de rigueur* in this machismo-ruled, sugar-cane-growing area.

In all but a few constituencies, the final day of polling is February 28, and counting is due to begin two days later.

But voting in Kashmir — disputed by India and Pakistan — and snow-bound Himalayan regions will take place after the results are announced.

Florida hit by tornadoes

AT LEAST 39 people were killed on Monday as 200mph tornadoes carved an 11-mile swath of death and destruction across the Orlando region in central Florida, uprooting hundreds of homes and vehicles, *writes Martin Kettle in Washington*.

The 12 tornadoes, which struck in the early hours, were attributed to the El Niño weather phenomenon in the Pacific ocean. The twisters carved a route around the city of Orlando, which is visited by millions of tourists each year.

"It is the greatest loss of life from a tornadic event in Florida history," said Jim Lushine, a Miami meteorologist.

Fields were littered with the remains of roofs ripped from homes. Mobile homes, of which there are thousands in the area, bore the brunt.

"Some people slept right through it. They woke up and their house was gone," said a spokeswoman for the Seminole County sheriff's office.

But the tornadoes missed the area's major tourist attractions, including the Walt Disney World and Universal Studios theme parks.



Remains of homes near Kissimmee, south of Orlando PHOTO: JOE SKIPPER

Calf cloned in Virginia

Tim Radford

MR JEFFERSON is the calf that could make history. The 45kg Holstein was born on February 16 — President's Day in the United States — at a veterinary college in Virginia: cloned from a line of foetal cells preserved in a laboratory.

Mr Jefferson was produced by scientists of PPL Therapeutics, an American subsidiary of the firm based at Roslin in Scotland, home of Dolly the cloned sheep.

They transferred the foetal DNA into an "empty" cow's egg, fused the egg and nucleus with a little burst of electricity, and then popped the now fertilised egg into a surrogate mother.

Mr Jefferson is a test animal for a new kind of pharmaceutical farming, in which genetically-engineered or transgenic animals will be "pharmed" to make high-cost, difficult-to-obtain human proteins to save thousands of lives.

There are genetically engineered cloned lambs called Polly and Molly, unveiled just before Christmas at Roslin, whose milk will provide a blood-clotting factor vital for one group of haemophiliacs.

But sheep are not as useful, as they produce only small quantities of milk. Cows produce gallons.

Iraq: no cause to rejoice

Continued from page 1

not tried hard enough to achieve one. It held out the hope that, with European help, the economic landscape of the Middle East would be transformed, but this has not happened. It proposed, in other words, a new political and economic order in the region but laid no foundations for it.

Even though their criticisms of Washington thus had genuine substance, Russia, France, and others who diverged over Middle Eastern policy were guilty of a desire to confound the United States just because it *was* the United States, as well as of patent greed for the trade and oil deals Saddam has been dangling before them.

Israel contributed hugely to the atmosphere of disillusion and lost purpose in which Saddam was able to survive and which inclined many ordinary Arabs to support him. Arab governments, caught between US failure to deliver what it had once seemed to promise, and the anger apparent on the streets of their capitals, were guilty of prevarication and passivity, in that all of them desired the fall of Saddam, but none would ever say so or do much that was significant to bring it about. Finally, a segment of Western public opinion has concentrated, with a certain emotional wilfulness, on the harm inflicted on Iraqis by sanctions, or threatened by American bombs, while paying no attention to the long-term crisis of the region.

With skill and some guile, Kofi Annan has exacted compliance in principle from the Iraqis and, by publicly endorsing the accord, has created a situation in which it would be hard for the Americans to do other than accept it. But while the Iraqis may, on paper, have retreated, in every other way they have gained. Sanctions are already half dismantled, and an end to them implicitly promised. There is "light at the end of the tunnel" for Saddam, if he is wise enough to avoid blatant cheating for the next few months. What we are watching is the terrible spectacle of his rehabilitation. One of the worst aspects of this week's bargain is that it makes it even more unlikely that policies such as recognising an Iraqi government in exile, indicting Saddam, or declaring no-drive zones in northern and southern Iraq will ever be taken up.

The US has suffered a serious defeat and the region has lost a set of guidelines which, however defective, were familiar and held in common. While the US will not cease to be a power in the area, there will be reactions that could have frightening results. Is it not possible, for instance, that Iran, which fears and hates Saddam, will now assign a higher priority to its own programmes both for weapons of mass destruction and for subversive efforts in Iraq? Is it not probable that Binyamin Netanyahu, pointing to a more serious Iraqi threat, will be fortified in his obstruction of genuine negotiations with the Palestinians?

Would it be surprising if Turkey should start bargaining with Saddam over a settlement of what Ankara sees as the chaotic situation in northern Iraq? Might it not be understandable if the Iraqi Kurds felt they had to come to terms with Baghdad? Might not the US itself lose heart and either turn away or engage in risky adventures?

There may be relief at the apparent success of Annan's mission, but there should be no rejoicing.

The Week

THE head of Australia's Anglican Church symbolically washed the feet of two indigenous bishops and formally apologised to Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders for the church's role in the practice under which Aborginal children were removed from their families for forcible assimilation into white society.

THE Spanish government gave guarded backing to a plan by mainstream Basque nationalists to bring about a negotiated end to the separatist group ETA's 30-year campaign of violence. Le Monde, page 17

THE United States Holocaust Memorial Museum forced its director, Walter Reich, to resign, ending an acrimonious tenure that was highlighted by an embarrassing invitation to the Palestinian Authority president, Yasser Arafat.

PILOT failure to follow the flight plan was the main reason a United States Marine jet severed a ski gondola cable, sending 20 people to their deaths, according to an Italian air force investigation.

A BOMB exploded under a crowded commuter train near Algiers, killing 18 people and injuring 25 in a new wave of attacks blamed on Muslim militants, state radio reported.

FBI agents admitted that the substance found on two scientists in a Las Vegas suburb last month was not "military grade anthrax", as they had suggested, but harmless vaccine.

THE trial of three men accused of murdering the award-winning Cambodian actor Haing Ngor began in Los Angeles.

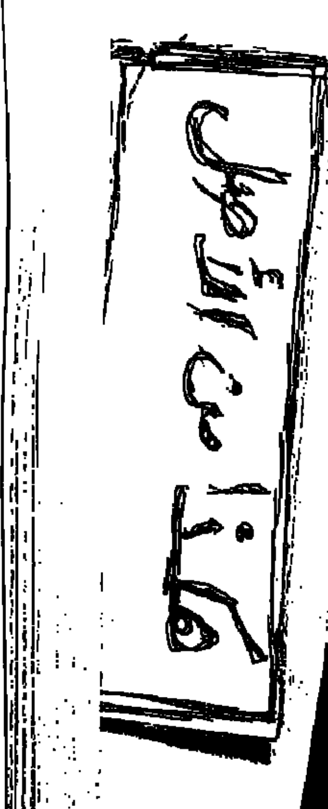
TWO British photographers got jail sentences in Los Angeles for harassing Hollywood star Arnold Schwarzenegger and his wife Maria Shriver.

ISRAELI planes launched 16 strikes and fired nearly 40 rockets at Hizbullah guerrillas in southern Lebanon last Sunday, security sources said.

THE Danish prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, called a general election on March 11 — six months ahead of the government's deadline.

THE United Nations launched an appeal for $109 million of aid to Sudan, where drought is exacerbating problems caused by 14 years of civil war.

GEORGIAN president Eduard Shevardnadze offered to negotiate with the political representatives of hostage-takers who have been holding three United Nations personnel.



Ethiopia faces new famine threat

Jonathan Steele in Addis Ababa

FROM the air the highlands of Tigray look as beige as sand. The forests have disappeared from the mountainsides, cut down by farmers looking in increasingly marginal areas for land to plough. In the lowlands there is no water on the meandering riverbeds to catch the sun.

The detail of disaster comes into full view on the ground.

"In half of this area conditions are as bad as the great famine of 1985. In the other half they are only slightly better," says Haile Mariam Haftu, head of the regional council in Samre in southern Tigray. "About 80 per cent of the district's 97,000 people need food aid and so far only 13,000 have got it."

In Mekele, the regional capital, senior officials of the Relief Society of Tigray confirm that Ethiopia's harvest has been the worst since the military regime of the Dergue collapsed in 1991. Experts from the United Nations World Food Programme share that assessment.

Although they differ on the exact numbers in need, and for how long relief will be needed, both sides agree that Ethiopia requires a minimum of 420,000 tonnes of food for at least 5 million people in Tigray and the other northern regions. The huge food deficit comes two years after the government boasted that Ethiopia had reached self-sufficiency and celebrated by exporting grain to Kenya.

This year's crisis is a reminder of how little agricultural irrigation there is and how much the 85 per cent of the population which lives in the countryside depends on rain.

"1996 was a climatic fluke. There were perfect rains in the right places in the right amounts at the right times," says Jim Borton of the United Nations Emergencies Unit for Ethiopia. "To talk of self-sufficiency was somewhat premature."

Last year there was little rain in the main growing period in July and August, and an unexpected wet spell during harvest time in November. Rains can knock down the standing corn and shatter the kernels, or make the harvested corn germinate and develop fungal infection.

Poor harvests do not necessarily lead to famine, and Ethiopia's prime minister, Meles Zenawi, remains confident that the television pictures of starving children which shocked the world in 1985 will not recur. "A famine like 1985 is impossible for a number of reasons," he says. "The surplus-producing areas are in a good position to cover a good deal of the shortfall."

Thanks to better collaboration with donor governments, Ethiopia now has emergency grain stocks around the country to cover a crisis. In 1985 it took months for foreign governments to ship aid. "If we get a hard pledge from a government, we can take it from stocks so that if it does take time to arrive, it doesn't matter," says Mr Meles.

The United States and the European Union have pledged 205,000 tonnes so far.

The government is determined to prevent another migration of peasants from famine areas. In 1985 the hungry flocked to main roads to wait for relief. Foreign charities set up huge cities of tents to shelter the sick and dying.

Although officials in Tigray admit that this year's looming crisis has already created some "distress migration", they are trying to direct aid to the neediest in the villages where they live.

Foreign donors applaud the government for its investments in agriculture since 1991, ranging from rural credit schemes to the building of earth dams to catch the rain.

The World Bank has offered a $490 million loan for rural road building. But the bank and the International Monetary Fund's support for the reduction of subsidies on fertiliser prices has led farmers to cut back on their use.

Some experts accuse the government and foreign donors of complacency in the face of a "time-bomb", even if this year's crisis is contained. The country has twice as many people as in 1985 and the population is growing at more than 3 per cent a year, while landholdings diminish in size to the point where fewer and fewer farmers can feed their families even in a good year. At some point there will be catastrophe.

"The highland areas are still unbelievably inaccessible," says Ben Foot of the Save the Children Fund. "The government and the donor community want everything to be positive, but it's hiding a reality which will hit them from behind."

Even this year, he says, "beside the 5 million the government accepts are in need, there are another 5 million on the edge".

South African army 'blocks ANC fighters'

David Beresford in Cape Town

A ROW has blown up between a team of British military advisers and the command of the South African army over allegations that the country's defence force is dragging its heels on the integration of ex-guerrillas into its ranks.

A terse exchange of correspondence between the British Military Advisory and Training Team (BMATT) in South Africa and the head of the army, General Reginald Otto, was tabled at a meeting of a parliamentary committee on defence this week.

The exchanges were precipitated by a carefully-worded but critical report on the progress of integration in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) drawn up by BMATT in October.

Noting that integration had "moved down the SANDF's order of priorities", the report said it tied in with a "regrettable" hardening of attitudes by commanders towards what it calls "non-statutory forces" (NSF), or former guerrillas. It referred to incidents of "nastiness" and "acrimony" in the integration process. And it said it was notable that there was "little in the physical nature of army training institutions to show any ex-NSF ownership. Very few room names, street names, flags, symbols, pictures or traditions come from the NSF."

The report drew a tart response from Gen Otto, who demanded that BMATT justify its criticism with specific examples. BMATT did so, detailing a string of incidents, including an occasion when minutes of the army accreditation board were "deliberately changed, thus misrepresenting board members", and courts martial which seemed to be biased against ex-guerrillas. In one case, a warrant officer had been merely reprimanded after locking three NSF officers in a room and tear-gassing them under the pretext of conducting an emergency drill.

Meanwhile former South African president P W Botha, aged 82, pleaded not guilty this week to charges of defying the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, headed by Desmond Tutu. He accused the Nobel laureate of malicious persecution and conducting a witch-hunt against Afrikaners.

It was the second appearance by Mr Botha before a black magistrate in his home town of George. The trial will begin on April 14.

No rightwing demonstrators turned out to support him. Instead, when he arrived at court, he was greeted by about 100 ANC protesters. In response to his earlier warnings against awakening the "tiger" in Afrikanerdom, the demonstrators held placards saying, "Afrikaner tiger meow, meow, meow", and "Botha's meow no match for Madiba's [Nelson Mandela's] roar".

But there is unease among ANC leaders over the prosecution. Mr Mandela is believed to have appealed personally to Mr Botha to back off and testify to the commission.

The ANC is concerned not to alienate South Africa's former white rulers. At a strategy meeting last weekend, ANC leaders decided to engage in dialogue with Afrikaners to reassure them about their place in South Africa.

Germany hit by blackmail

Ian Traynor in Bonn

POLICE in Baden-Württemberg are scouring supermarket shelves for baby food poisoned by a blackmailer demanding 800,000 marks ($440,000) from the Nestlé food multinational.

The same force has just arrested a 46-year-old printer who allegedly tried to extort 5 million marks from Daimler-Benz by threatening to shoot drivers of Mercedes cars.

In neighbouring Bavaria a man has been demanding 5 million marks from the Lidl supermarket chain under threat of contaminating the food it sells. Lidl has responded by opening a bank account from which he can withdraw 1,000 marks a day.

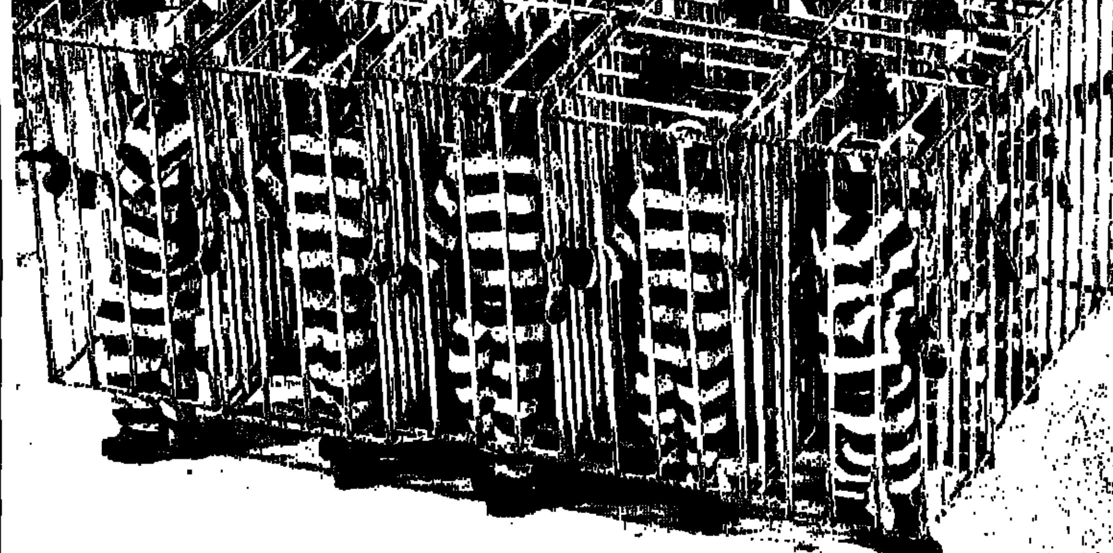
And in Nuremburg a blackmailer is demanding a million marks from the Noris bank for keeping quiet about confidential client information.

Cyanide-spiked mayonnaise, baby food laced with pesticide, strawberry jam adulterated with rat poison — these are a few of the cases exercising criminologists, company boardrooms and the German CID as blackmailers, mostly amateurs, try to extort easy money from industrialists.

"There's a boom in this kind of crime in Germany at the moment," says Rainer von zur Muehlen, head of the association of independent German security consultants. "It's a phenomenon that can't really be explained."

There are believed to have been 18 cases already this year. Most involve the food industry, generating a panic about food safety which appears to satisfy the blackmailers' craving for publicity. The publicity then inspires copycats, the police say.

There are now six times as many cases — about 150 a year — as there were in the mid-1980s, putting Germany with Britain at the top of the international league for blackmail through product tampering.



Party politics . . . A samba group at the Rio carnival, whose theme, 'Samba in your feet and hands in the air; this is a stick-up', is intended as a protest against political corruption in Brazil PHOTO: PAULO WHITAKER

Business out to thwart kidnappers

Richard Galpin in Karachi

FOR 18 days, Nazir Chakrani, a senior oil executive from Karachi, was held hostage in the jungles of Sindh province, in Pakistan. By day he was forced to march for up to seven hours through the thick undergrowth. At night he was chained to a tree and given just enough food to keep him alive.

Mr Chakrani, like several other prominent businessmen, had been dragged from his car at gunpoint in Karachi, Pakistan's commercial capital and one of the most violent and lawless cities in south Asia. His kidnappers demanded a ransom of $410,000.

Suddenly the tables were turned. "One morning at about five o'clock I was woken up by the sound of gunfire," Mr Chakrani says. "The kidnappers panicked, released me, then tried to run away. Some were caught."

Mr Chakrani had been rescued after a painstaking investigation, not by the police but by a voluntary organisation, the Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), which is rapidly replacing the police force as Karachi's most reliable law-enforcement agency. "If my family had relied on the police and not the CPLC, I don't think I'd have been released without paying the ransom," he says.

The CPLC was set up in 1989 by a group of businessmen who had little faith that the Karachi police — regarded as the most corrupt in the country — would tackle a wave of kidnappings in a city torn by ethnic violence that has claimed thousands of lives.

With the blessing of the provincial governor and the intelligence agencies, a small group of volunteers set up an office in the city centre, largely funded by contributions from local people. In its first year the CPLC resolved more than 80 per cent of kidnapping cases; the victims were released unhurt, no money changed hands, and eight gangs were jailed.

Nine years later it is a fully-fledged crime detection and prevention agency with phone-tapping and voice-matching equipment, a database of all known criminals in the area, and software to create identikit pictures.

"The police lack the training for crime detection, they lack equipment and they lack qualified people," says the CPLC's founder, Jameel Yusuf. "And because the police force has been politicised, people do not trust them. So ultimately, we took over their role because people wanted us to do it."

Moroccans defy crackdown on drugs trade

David Sharrock in Tangier

ASK any teenage northern Moroccan male what his future will be and he will tell you he has three options: to escape across the sea to Europe; become a contraband dealer; or get into the hashish trade and end up either rich or in prison.

Mohamed, who has tried all three, is the perfect guide to Morocco's "green gold" hashish economy.

We drive north out of Tangier along the coast before turning inland into the foothills of the Rif mountains. At Oued Allan 50 fishermen are crowded around a small catch, haggling over prices. "This is one of the most important places for sending the hashish across to Spain," says Mohamed, gesturing towards the windsurfers' paradise-town of Tarifa across the strait.

"It's like a river — very easy to cross. Of course, it's easy to get caught too, if you don't pay the baksheesh or if the government's wanting to clean up. Most of the big dealers are in prison now but there's a new generation making themselves rich."

Under pressure from the European Union, in particular Spain, the Moroccan authorities have cracked down on the *kif* (hashish) market, but with mixed results. The offensive began six years ago, when 10,000 troops were stationed on the northern coast to patrol trafficking routes.

Tangier became the focus of police work and a number of drug barons were jailed. The people of Tangier say the crackdown was too harsh. "They have squeezed the life out of Tangier, there's no trickle-down effect any more from the hashish trade and every sector has suffered," laments one ex-pat. Cynics note that not all the Mister Bigs were rounded up; some suggest that politicians' names were linked to the investigations.

The authorities admit that about 173,000 acres of land in the Rif region are under cannabis cultivation; unofficial statistics put the figure even higher.

The October harvest was a bumper crop, yielding about 30 tonnes of cannabis. It is a tricky problem to solve, because the government's grip on the rebellious Berber people of the north has never been absolute.

Attempts to promote alternative cash crops have produced few results. Cannabis fetches 10 times the price of wheat. "Without kif we would starve," says Mohamed.

Production is therefore quietly tolerated while the authorities go after the dealers. Three-quarters of the cannabis grown in the Rif is destined for Europe. The Moroccans claim to have broken about 30 drugs networks in 1996-97, arresting 34 Britons, 126 Spaniards, 59 French and 25 Dutch.

In a sinister development last year, six tonnes of cocaine washed up on Morocco's shores. A Spanish-registered vessel sailing out of Southampton had dumped its cargo after engine failure forced the Colombian crew to shelter in Moroccan waters.

The Moroccans used the incident to support their contention that the drugs trade is international and that Europe should not blame Morocco for all its drug problems.

"We are left to police Europe's southern shores alone," a government official said. "European aid to combat drugs in north Morocco is feeble, if not non-existent."

Mali village sends aid to Quebec

Alex Duval Smith in Bamako

MOVED by the plight of thousands of Canadians whose lives were devastated by ice storms last month, the elders of a West African village called on their subjects to send emergency aid.

The 40,000 West African francs ($65) dispatched from Sanankoroba, Mali, to its twin town of Saint Elisabeth in Quebec should surprise no one, said Moussa Konaté, who was charged with sending off the money and a fax of sympathy.

"There was no fuss when farmers in Saint Elisabeth helped farmers in Sanankoroba after floods in 1995 and 1997," he said. "We are aware that the [money] they have received from us is symbolic. But it shows that giving has to do with the heart, not the sum."

Mr Konaté said most of the 4,500 people in Sanankoroba, who farm cotton and millet, had never travelled further than the 30km to the capital, Bamako. Living under straw roofs on the arid Sahel plain, they had no concept of what ice was until battery-driven televisions in the village showed news footage last month of homes in Quebec without heating and light.

But prayers were immediately said in the village mosques for Saint Elisabeth, a dairy-farming community of about 1,500 people, 100km north of Montreal, which has been twinned with Sanankoroba for 13 years.

Mr Konaté said: "When the twinning offer came up, the 15 clan elders of Sanankoroba were very dubious because they had bad memories of colonisation. But Saint Elisabeth sent a group of young people, who ate with the villagers and slept in their huts. The elders decided the youths were from a great people."

Since then, under a scheme called Hands for Tomorrow, Saint Elisabeth and Sanankoroba have set aside land which is communally farmed to fund the twinning scheme.

Money raised from the Canadian land has bought 30 oxen and ploughs for Sanankoroba, built six classrooms and allowed its farmers to visit Saint Elisabeth.





GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 1 1998

Albright's night on the town ends in jeers

WASHINGTON DIARY
Martin Kettle

AS A conscientious reporter, I had switched on the television to watch the event from Ohio State, but I had done so without expectations. I'll get on with something else, I thought, with that in the background. It was just possible that Madeleine Albright might utter some slightly different nuance to her endlessly repeated formulations about United States policy towards Iraq that would be worth parsing for the readers. Or conceivably William Cohen would take the opportunity to make some further announcement about fresh deployments in the Gulf. Unlikely in both cases, but better safe than sorry.

Albright had just begun to speak, and I was starting to do something quite unrelated to Iraq, when the first shouts began. Like most people watching, I suspect, I initially discounted their significance. One has become accustomed, in recent years, to the occasional heckler breaching the security and disrupting political meetings in America and in Britain.

The event in Columbus, Ohio, reeked of careful planning and modern political stage management. It came hard on the heels of a speech by President Clinton at the Pentagon in which he spelled out his Iraq objectives with greater care and in greater detail than before, and in which he appeared to address some of the issues that the published opinion polls, and doubtless also his own private surveys, had identified as troubling to some Americans.

The next day, a formidable trio of US foreign policy makers — secretary of state Albright, defence secretary Cohen and the president's national security adviser Sandy Berger — was dispatched by the White House to conduct a televised "town meeting" on the administration's Iraq policy. They had been sent to what the scriptwriters always call "the American heartland" so that viewers could see that a rational and humane Iraq policy was being made by three rational and humane people, people who could communicate well and reassuringly.

Any resemblance to a true town meeting was, one supposed, superficial and illusory. In a true town meeting, the doors are opened and anyone who is interested can come in. In a town meeting, the floor is thrown open to the public so that they can make their own views clear. In a town meeting, the flow of the debate is spontaneous and unpredictable.

But modern politics abhors spontaneity or unpredictability. Modern politics is about getting a message across to an audience that doesn't answer back. The purpose of the audience is to give an illusion that people like you are listening open-mindedly to what the politician has to say and to respond enthusiastically to the politician's message. Dialogue is never the purpose of a modern political meeting.

The set-up in Ohio wholly supported that interpretation. This superficially vernacular local gathering was in reality a large television studio audience. The whole thing was set up with and for CNN, thereby confirming, to the fury of the other networks, that Ted Turner's corporation enjoys most favoured network status with the Clinton White House. It was "moderated" by two familiar CNN anchors, Bernard Shaw and Judy Woodruff. The real audience was not the thousand or so people in the hall in Columbus, but the television audience at home and even more, one suspected, the very small number of Iraqi government officials who have access to CNN and who are familiar with using the Atlanta-based network as a modern-day diplomatic courier service.

No wonder, then, that there was so little expectation that the Ohio meeting would consist of anything other than the familiar format of modern political public relations. The shouts which accompanied Albright's opening remarks continued through Cohen's and Berger's too. They became chants — of "No War", of "No World War" and of "No Racist War". They developed into fierce and focused interventions, questioning the US's moral right to bomb Iraqi civilians, challenging its claim to act unilaterally without United Nations authority, demanding that the US act consistently by opposing all undemocratic dictatorships, including many that it is anxious to support.

Albright and her colleagues were manifestly unhappy from beginning to end. Though they managed to get their scripted message across, the overwhelming impression from Ohio was, first, that nobody supports Saddam Hussein; second, that the administration was embarking on a course of action whose conclusion was genuinely unclear; and, third, that American public opinion is divided and sceptical about the role which the administration is seeking to exercise in Iraq.

Ohio State was a famous débâcle. Clearly, someone in the White House blundered in their preparations, and in the ensuing days officials scampered to distance themselves from responsibility. On the other hand, if they had taken the trouble to read an opinion poll in the Columbus Dispatch earlier that week, which showed that fewer than one in five voters in Ohio supported military rather than diplomatic action to solve the Iraq weapons crisis, then they might have better understood the situation into which they sent the hapless Albright and her colleagues.

Nothing in modern politics is ever quite what it seems, and one should not assume that what we saw at Ohio State was a new, campus-based anti-war mass protest movement of the sort which disabled the US in Vietnam 30 years ago. But the echoes were unmistakable, and that was how it struck a lot of people to whom I spoke both inside and outside Washington last week.

Whether with a true note or a false one, Ohio State tolled a warning bell for the Clinton administration's Iraq policy, and that perception, both at home and abroad, has damaged the president at a time when for many other reasons he could ill afford it.

TONIGHT ON NIGHTLINE
WE DISCUSS THE BENEFITS OF THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN TO BOMB IRAQ WITH A DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF EXPERTS...
WAR
FAMINE
PESTILENCE
DEATH

A man who is all things to all men

Lower Saxony's premier wants Chancellor Kohl's job, writes **Ian Traynor**

THE boogie-woogie piano rolled comfortingly from the stage, the free beer flowed, and the man who wants to lead Germany into the next millennium strutted confidently to the podium.

"The Kohl era is over," proclaimed Gerhard Schröder, launching himself into a deftly pitched 0-minute performance which he hopes will propel him to the chancellery in Bonn in September.

"Ah," grinned Heinrich Sprechmeyer, a retired steelworker, "Gerhard Schröder's our man. He's a man of the people. He's the only one who can beat Kohl."

In front of 700 trades unionists and Social Democrats in a municipal hall in the northern town of Osnabrück, Mr Schröder plied his laiirite message that, after 16 years of government by Helmut Kohl, Germany badly needs a change.

Mr Kohl's "contempt" for the working man and his cabinet of "dilettantes" had resulted in 5 million out of work, but national pride could and should reinvigorate the hugely successful post-war German model. "We need to adapt, but there's little reason to throw away the things that made this country strong."

Mr Schröder is a self-made man. He was born into poverty and ruin in 1944, the year his father died in the war. He and his five siblings were reared by his mother, a cleaner.

Since 1990 he has been the Social Democratic premier of Lower Saxony. His Osnabrück performance was aimed at winning a third term in the state election on Sunday.

It is a poll of much more than regional significance. Mr Schröder is locked in an increasingly bad-tempered feud with his party leader, Oskar Lafontaine, for the nomination to challenge Mr Kohl on September 27.

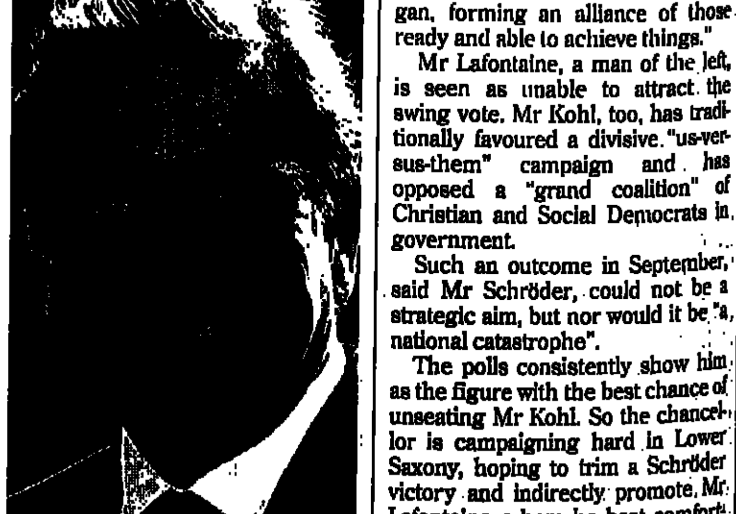
The Lower Saxony poll is seen as a dummy run for September and could go a long way towards deciding the contest. "It's a very personalised campaign," said Christian Wulff, the Christian Democrat challenger in the state.

"Politics here has been nothing but Schröder for the past eight years," complained Rebekka Harms, the Greens' senior candidate. "Everything is subordinate to the Schröder fixation."

Mr Schröder is a master of realpolitik — all things to all men and women. He calls himself a pragmatist; his critics call him a shameless opportunist. His party is divided on his merits. But he is popular with the public and this is his trump card in claiming the chancellor candidacy.

Despite 15 years in opposition, the Social Democrats have performed wretchedly in a string of regional elections over the past two years, forfeiting up to 6 per cent of their vote.

Mr Schröder's pitch is that he is the only figure who can reverse that trend. He has hitched his fate to that promise. Should he fail to get within two points of the 44.3 per cent he won in 1994 in Lower Saxony, he will give up his bid for the candidacy. Polls suggest he will get about 45 per cent.



Gerhard Schröder: pragmatist or shameless opportunist?

His other main claim — and the weapon he will deploy against Mr Lafontaine and Mr Kohl — is that he is the only politician capable of harvesting crossover votes from the Christian Democrats.

"Who can maximise our chances on September 27 and make victory probable?" he asked rhetorically. "The New Centre should be our slogan, forming an alliance of those ready and able to achieve things."

Mr Lafontaine, a man of the left, is seen as unable to attract the swing vote. Mr Kohl, too, has traditionally favoured a divisive "us-versus-them" campaign and has opposed a "grand coalition" of Christian and Social Democrats in government.

Such an outcome in September, said Mr Schröder, could not be a strategic aim, but nor would it be "a national catastrophe".

The polls consistently show him as the figure with the best chance of unseating Mr Kohl. So the chancellor is campaigning hard in Lower Saxony, hoping to trim a Schröder victory and indirectly promote Mr Lafontaine, whom he beat comfortably in 1990. Much will hinge on Sunday, but all the signs are that Mr Lafontaine could yet steal the candidacy from Mr Schröder.

"Many in the party see Schröder as too rightwing, too business-friendly," said Karl Luiker, aged 71 and a party member for 35 years. "But I can't see a better candidate for the party and for Germany."

Martin Walker is on holiday

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
March 1 1998

Suharto has his back to the wall

Martin Jacques in Jakarta

"IF YOU ARE patient and wait until April, you will see the last revolution of the 20th century."

Dr Hermawan Sulistyo was deadly serious. He carefully produced from his briefcase the chronology of Indonesia's imminent revolution, which he wrote last November. "Everything has so far been proved right," he said.

The smog that blanketed Indonesia in a terrible haze for months on end last year has returned with a vengeance and is now covering parts of Sumatra and Borneo. But the more worrying hot spots this year are those caused by economic collapse and boiling ethnic tensions in this huge country of 200 million people.

Pamanukan is a small town, 90 kilometres north of the capital, which experienced its first riot last week. "It started at 9am," said Teddy, the local pharmacist. "It lasted until three in the afternoon."

The evidence was all too plain to see. About 30 shops had been burned down and many others remained closed. Owners had sprayed "Muslim," "Pro-Muslim" or "Islam" on their shutters in a desperate bid to prevent their businesses from going the same way.

According to Teddy, most of the wrecked shops had been Chinese-owned. Most of the small Chinese minority seemed to have left town, frightened for their lives. "People are hungry and desperate. That's the main reason," he said.

A week on, the situation remains tense, with soldiers in battledress patrolling the streets, sub-machine-guns by their side. Such riots have become a frequent occurrence in the past few weeks along the northern coast of Java, and throughout much of Indonesia.

More than 10 people died in one week alone. Indonesia is experiencing its worst social unrest since 1965, the year that General Suharto, its effective dictator, came to power accompanied by one of the worst massacres of the 20th century.

It is this looming threat of an uncontrollable social convulsion which is driving Suharto to growing acts of desperation.

He is the only Asian leader who has seriously sought to resist the demands of the International Monetary Fund and its de facto master, the United States. Unhappy with the terms of the IMF deal and its failure to stabilise the rupiah, he has proposed a board whose role would be to supervise the pegging of the currency to the dollar.

Few think it would work. Over the past week, it has been opposed by the IMF, the World Bank, the US, the European Union and, significantly, Indonesia's hitherto friendly neighbour Singapore.

President Clinton's anxieties led him to telephone Suharto late last week, ahead of the Group of Seven meeting in London, for the second time within eight days, telling him to show more political commitment to economic reform and offering more financial help.

Suharto will probably back off, although nobody is sure. But he is desperate to try to stabilise the rupiah, whose value has fallen from 2,400 to the dollar last July to around 10,000 today. The result has been twofold. Most Indonesian firms are now technically bankrupt, and a ferocious inflationary spiral has been unleashed.

"The economy is in absolutely appalling shape," said a leading analyst for a Western financial house in Jakarta. "No one has got any money. Most companies have cut back, and many have effectively stopped operating. It's now a cash-only economy," added the analyst who, for fear of finding his stay in Indonesia cut short, preferred to remain anonymous.

The impact on the people of this densely populated archipelago, which from one end to the other is the same distance as from Los Angeles to New York, has been devastating.

The price of rice and cooking oil has gone up by between 30 and 100 per cent in under two months, while that of chicken, the main meat, has increased by between 50 and 100 per cent. "Thousands have already died from hunger and lack of medical supplies, and many more will die in the coming months," the analyst added.

The desperation in Pamanukan and thousands of other towns throughout Indonesia is the result of an economic hurricane that has left people confused, powerless and bitter.

What makes Indonesia different from every other country that has been engulfed in the Asian meltdown is that the economic crisis threatens the very survival of the regime.

William Keeling, an expert on Indonesia for the merchant bank Dresdner, explained: "The political and social implications of the economic downturn were always going to be enormous."

Suharto has been in power for 32 years. He is 76 years old, the system is highly autocratic, corruption is endemic, and the disparity between rich and poor has grown apace during the boom years of the last decade.

Resentment over the division of the spoils has become an issue throughout the region, but nowhere more so than in Indonesia.

EVERYONE comments on it. For Indria Samego, an economist, "development has been about growth, rather than equity". Sulistyo is more outspoken. "Most of all, there is a growing sense of injustice. Too few people got too much, and too many people got too little."

He is sure that Suharto's days are strictly numbered. The problem is that the opportunities to get rid of him fairly painlessly have been squandered. On March 10 he will be re-elected president by the Consultative Assembly for another five-year term. According to the senior analyst: "It's now down to bedlam."

Meanwhile Southeast Asia is looking on with growing alarm at the implosion of its mighty neighbour. George Yeoh, Singapore's minister for industry, said: "They never expected this. Until recently all of us were convinced the Indonesian economy was sound. The worrying thing for us is not so much the economy, but the political and strategic implications."

Malaysia and Singapore fear a huge influx of refugees which can only exacerbate the sensitive nature of inter-ethnic relations in their own countries.

Already the fires are burning again in Kalimantan, threatening yet again to engulf the region in a similar acrid haze to last year, but this time with the Indonesian army too preoccupied with social hot spots to deal with the physical ones.

Sulistyo painstakingly attempted to explain why the Indonesian revolution had not yet happened. "Although the rupiah hit its lowest point in early January, it was the month of Ramadan and self-restraint. As soon as it was over, there was no reason for self-restraint any more. Nobody had any money after Ramadan and prices were rocketing, so the riots started.

"With the government now threatening severe repression in the weeks leading up to the Consultative Assembly, things will begin to quieten down again. But after that, there will be a renewed sense of disappointment.

"Prices hikes will get even worse. By early April, the situation will be uncontrollable and the president will declare a state of emergency.

"The revolution will start, but there will be a lot of blood. It will be very messy. Angry mobs will turn on Suharto and the Chinese." — *The Observer*

Washington Post, page 13

Bay of Pigs was fiasco, CIA admits

Tim Weiner

ONE of the most secret documents of the cold war is out: the Central Intelligence Agency's brutally honest inquest into the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961, which laid the blame for the disastrous invasion of Cuba on the agency's own institutional arrogance, ignorance and incompetence.

The 150-page document also warned those who might want to use the CIA to overthrow enemies, saying that job belonged to the Pentagon and its broad arsenal of military forces.

The report painted a picture of an agency shot through with self-deception, whose secret operations were "ludicrous or tragic or both", and said almost none of the CIA officers involved in the Cuban operation could speak Spanish. The officers were also contemptuous of the Cuban "puppets" they had hand-picked to replace Fidel Castro.

The Bay of Pigs invasion, carried out in April 1961, was organised by the CIA and was intended to lead to the overthrow of Castro, whose communist government just 90 miles from the Florida coast was seen as a beachhead for Soviet influence in the West.

While the basic story of the commando raid on Cuba is known, the report, entitled The Inspector-General's Survey Of The Cuban Operation, is a well of hard facts. A leading historian of the operation, Peter Wyden, wrote wistfully in his book Bay Of Pigs: The Untold Story, published in 1979, that the report was "probably buried for ever".



Fidel Castro commands the rout of the CIA-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs PHOTO: RAUL CORRALES

But last week, after 36 years of secrecy during which all but one copy of the report was destroyed, a Freedom of Information Act request unearthed the sole surviving volume. It had been locked in the safe of the CIA director.

The report, written after an investigation by the CIA's inspector-general, Lyman Kirkpatrick, is a record of bungling that makes for chilling reading.

CIA leaders believed it was President John F Kennedy's failure to approve a simultaneous attack on Cuba's air force that caused the deaths of nearly 1,500 raiders.

The Kirkpatrick report said planning for the operation began in April 1960. It was to be a classic covert action "in which the hand of the United States would not appear". The plan called for a group of exiled Cuban leaders, supported by a CIA cadre, to build political momentum toward toppling Castro, who had taken power 16 months earlier.

But, the report said, CIA officers became so wrapped up in the operation that "they lost sight of ultimate goals". Their budget grew from $4.4 million to $46 million. Inside a year, they had created an unruly, ill-trained invasion force whose cover had been blown before the operation took place.

The officers staffing the operation were in many instances incapable: "Very few spoke Spanish or had Latin American background knowledge."

The report added that CIA employees treated the Cubans training to overthrow Castro "like dirt". The abuse left the hungry, disillusioned trainees "wondering what kind of Cuban future they were fighting for".

The Revolutionary Council, the CIA-created alternative to Castro, became the agency's "puppets", said the report. "Isolated in a Miami safe house, 'voluntarily' but under strong persuasion, the Revolutionary Council members awaited the outcome of a military operation which they had not planned and knew little about, while agency-written bulletins were issued to the world in their name."

If the CIA could not work with Cubans, Kirkpatrick warned prophetically, "how can the agency possibly succeed with the natives of Black Africa or south-east Asia?"

The report said the CIA deluded itself and the White House that the invasion would magically create in Cuba an anti-Castro "organised resistance that did not exist".

On April 15, 1961, CIA pilots knocked out part of Castro's air force, and were set to finish the job. At the last minute, on April 16, President Kennedy called off the air strikes, but the message did not reach the 1,511 commandos headed for the Bay of Pigs. Three days of fighting destroyed the invading force.

A brigade commander sent his final messages: "We are out of ammo and fighting on the beach. Please send help." And: "In water. Out of ammo. Enemy closing in. Help must arrive in next hour." It never came.

The CIA viewed the report as poison: "In unfriendly hands, it can become a weapon unjustifiably to attack the entire mission, organisation, and functions of the agency," the CIA's deputy director at the time said.
— *New York Times*

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Hague's single rose fails to seduce Tory faithful

THE REFORM of the Conservative party, announced last week by its new leader, William Hague, may well be a necessary step on the road back to power, but the occasion also served to demonstrate how long a march that is likely to be.

Mr Hague hopes that the makeover will, among other things, bury the bitter squabbles over Europe that did so much to damage the party in the run-up to the last election. But a visit by the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, to receive the freedom of the City of London, showed that the Tories are as riven as ever.

The diehard Eurosceptic, John Redwood, who is the Tories' industry spokesman, had to be slapped down by Mr Hague for criticising the honour for Mr Kohl. The City, he had suggested, had been put up to it by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and the honour should have waited until the Chancellor left office.

As part of the new Tory image, Mr Hague has it in mind to replace the flame of liberty, the party's symbol in recent elections. One flight of fancy is that, since New Labour did so well with its red rose symbol, the Tories might adopt a white rose to highlight Mr Hague's Yorkshire origins. But historians in the Hague camp were quick to note that, in the War of the Roses, the House of York came off second best.

The Tories are even thinking of changing their party's colour from its traditional blue. But to what? Some voices favoured purple, which others thought smacked a little too much of Imperial Rome.

Mr Hague's strategists concede that they are playing a long game. And, believing that they lost the last election over questions of image and character rather than of policy, they are not in the business of adopting new policies. There will, however, be a restatement of "Tory principles" and, after the local elections in May, a "Listening to Britain" consultation exercise to discover the issues about which voters care most.

The hapless Chancellor Kohl meanwhile suffered another rebuff when his name mysteriously disappeared from a list of those due to receive an honorary degree from Cambridge university. A spokesman said that "reservations" had been expressed, possibly by some who shared Mr Redwood's feelings.

THE MULTINATIONAL 3M Group could face a bill of up to £23 million if some 4,700 patients who have received a faulty hip replacement are found to need a revision operation.

The Medical Devices Agency issued a hazard warning after studies showed that up to 21 per cent of the 3M Capital prostheses, made by 3M Health Care, failed within five years. The artificial joints were becoming loose and, in the process, eroding healthy bone in a way that could reduce the chances of success in any further replacement operation.

The suspect devices were implanted over a six-year period between 1991 and 1997. More than 250,000 hip operations took place during that time, and the 3M implant was used in 4,700 of them. The Government set about tracing the recipients, and 3M Health Care said it would pay for reviewing the patients, for operations to correct faulty implants, and for "lifelong follow-up care".

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother meanwhile looked remarkably spry and seemed to walk without too much difficulty as she left hospital 23 days after her second hip replacement operation. She suffered a fall while inspecting her horses at Sandringham.

A PUB LANDLORD from East Sussex, Alan Coomber, was resigned to the prospect of becoming England's first beef martyr after two "customers" to whom he served T-bone steaks turned out to be undercover environmental health officers from his local council.

The sale of beef on the bone was banned three months ago after scientists concluded that there was a very small chance that bone could transmit BSE, or mad cow disease, to humans. Mr Coomber has openly defied the ban and, even though he now faces prosecution, continues to sell T-bone steak and has set up a fighting fund to cover his legal costs.

A Scottish hotelier has already been served with a summons after allegedly serving rib of beef at a free dinner given for 170 people six days after the ban was introduced. He and Mr Coomber could face fines of up £5,000 or two years in prison.

MICHAEL COLE, possibly Britain's best-known PR man, announced his early retirement after 10 hard years as spokesman for the multi-millionaire Mohamed Al Fayed, owner of Harrods and father of Dodi, who died with Diana, Princess of Wales, in a car crash in Paris. Both he and Mr Al Fayed paid generous tributes to one another, though some suspected that Mr Cole had quit because of his employer's erratic behaviour.

Formerly the BBC's court correspondent, Mr Cole spoke for Mr Al Fayed in the row over the ownership of Harrods, in the revelations which brought down the Tory MPs Jonathan Aitken and Neil Hamilton, and more recently aired his boss's improbable conviction that Dodi and the princess died as the result of a secret conspiracy. It had started to sound as though Mr Cole was no longer quite in control.





Masons given final warning

Alan Travis

PARLIAMENT last week clashed openly with Britain's oldest "secret" society as MPs ordered the Freemasons to hand over the names of their members connected with past police corruption scandals.

The officials of the United Grand Lodge of England now risk facing a formal charge of being in contempt of Parliament, backed by the threat of imprisonment, unless they are prepared to submit to the demand from MPs for names.

The dramatic confrontation — combined with the promise earlier in the week by the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to bring in legislation to "out" masons who are serving judges and police officers — threatens finally to strip away the cloak of secrecy from the 8,660 masonic lodges.

There were a series of angry exchanges between Chris Mullin, chairman of the Commons home affairs committee, and Michael Higham, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasonry, over the naming of masons.

It was a contest in which MPs are trying to shine a light on the activities of an organisation which reaches the highest levels of the British establishment.

Among its ruling council are the current Grand Master, the Duke of Kent; Lord Farnham, Pro Grand Master; a former Appeal Court judge, Sir John Balcombe; a second senior judicial figure, Judge J L Sessions; and the Earl of Cadogan.

Martin Short, author of Inside The Brotherhood, said last week: "Thirty years ago, no politician would have dared to attempt to call the freemasons to account.

"They really are on the ropes. The impact on their membership could be quite serious."

If he does not disclose the requisite names by March 5, Mr Higham risks being dragged to the Bar of the House of Commons and a maximum penalty of being imprisoned until the end of the parliamentary session in October. This punishment was last used in 1880.

Mr Mullin, a lifelong campaigner against judicial miscarriages of justice, challenged Mr Higham to identify his members among 161 names connected with the now disbanded West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, of professional people involved in the investigation into the Birmingham pub bombings and of those involved in the Stalker affair, which concerned an official inquiry into the RUC's alleged "shoot to kill" policy.

Mr Mullin and other MPs clashed repeatedly with Mr Higham during the hearing. At one point, Mr Higham dismissed the police scandals as now being "pretty academic" and complained that MPs were conducting a "fishing expedition".

His stonewalling provoked Mr Mullin to point out angrily that he was talking about allegations from masons and former police officers that there was "a firm within a firm" in the former West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, which was responsible for more than 30 miscarriages of justice.

After the hearing Mr Higham indicated that co-operation might be forthcoming as the masons were a law-abiding society but he stressed that the names and occupations of masons were private matters between them and their local lodge.

The secret of stonewalling

PARLIAMENTARY SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

WHEN the Commons home affairs committee met the freemasons, it was one of the great parliamentary slugfests.

I won't say that extracting information from Commander Michael Higham, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of Freemasons, was like getting blood out of a stone. He is, somehow, floppier than that. More like squeezing malt whisky out of a face flannel, perhaps.

In the end Chris Mullin, the committee's chairman, donned the black cap. "Are you aware," he thundered, "that if we issue an order, your refusal to co-operate will amount to a contempt of Parliament?"

Mr Higham said it wasn't as simple as that. Mr Mullin told him that he hadn't got the remotest faith in anything he said. "Will you provide the information we have asked for in the form we have asked for it?"

"I would have to go back to the board and ask them," the Commander stalled. An old naval hand, he looked like someone who had steered a ship through typhoons and had just been warned about a spot of drizzle ahead.

"We are reaching make your mind up time," stormed Mr Mullin. "Yes or no?"

Finally, the Grand Secretary uttered the words. "I'm saying 'no'," he said, "but not in a contemptuous way." (Clearly he hadn't realised that contempt doesn't mean putting your finger up your nose and going "Na na na na na". It means refusing to do as ordered, as in "contempt of court". So he meant, "I am disobeying you, but not in a disobedient kind of way.")

What the committee is trying to do is to find out the names of trouser-rollers in the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad, who were responsible for innumerable miscarriages of justice.

To paraphrase Mr Higham, there were very few of these, and he wasn't going to shop them without their permission. Indeed, having once promised the committee he would ask his board to reveal the names, he had later changed his mind. Most MPs were infuriated.

Except Gerald Howarth (C, Aldershot) who resembled one of those tennis machines which throw balls at players. His control lever had been fixed at slow lob.

Mr Howarth was worried about plans to oblige judges and policemen to reveal whether they were freemasons. "Don't you believe the Government's response has been Draconian?" he asked. "Phwobb!" went the ball.

"Don't your members feel a sense of persecution?" "Phwobbl!"

"They feel impending persecution," Mr Higham vouchsafed. "Yes, and a deep sense of resentment at the slur on their integrity."

I realised once again that freemasons are even more paranoid about us than we non-Masons are about them. Mr Higham may now go to jail this year for contempt, which would no doubt please him a lot. But I very much doubt it.

Bombing brings loyalist warning

John Mullin

THE hardline Loyalist Volunteer Force this week vowed to mount fearsome revenge attacks on Catholics after terrorists exploded a massive car bomb on Monday in the LVF's heartland, Portadown in County Armagh.

Mainstream loyalists warned that their four-year-old ceasefire was stretched to breaking point after the second car bomb attack on a Protestant town in mid-Ulster in 72 hours. They suspect IRA involvement after Sinn Fein's suspension from the multi-party talks on Friday last week.

Billy Hutchinson, of the Progressive Unionist Party, linked to the Ulster Volunteer Force which is on ceasefire, said: "I am asking loyalists to remain calm, but sooner or later my influence is going to evaporate. Political dialogue is not working. Time is running out for the loyalist ceasefire."

The IRA said in a call to Ireland's RTE broadcasting network that it was not involved and that its ceasefire remained intact.

Hopes of a political settlement were careering towards a new low as David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists, also linked the attack to the IRA. He said: "There can be no question of Sinn Fein re-entering the talks process after this."

Tony Blair's decision on whether to meet Sinn Fein before its scheduled return to the talks on March 9 is assuming greater significance. Sinn Fein is threatening to stay away if the Prime Minister fails to see its leaders. It also wants it made impossible for Ronnie Flanagan, Ulster's chief constable, to rule that Sinn Fein has breached the Mitchell principles, and wants Mr Blair to force Mr Trimble to enter face-to-face negotiations.

The Sinn Fein chairman, Mitchel McLaughlin, said: "We will go back in when there is a viable negotiating process and we will go back in on our own terms."

A Unionist walkout — long resisted by Mr Trimble — is on the cards if Sinn Fein gets its meeting.

Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, denying IRA involvement in the Portadown bombing, said: "I think that the IRA would, if it was ending its cessation, say so."

Suspicion was falling on the Continuity IRA, the splinter group opposed to the ceasefire.

Security sources believe IRA members are working with CIRA. Since the two murders in Belfast which prompted Sinn Fein's exclusion from the talks, the IRA has been linked to one killing and two car bombs.

The LVF tried to explode a car bomb just across the Irish border in Dromad, County Louth, early on Monday. However, the bomb was made safe.

Irvine tries to turn media tide

Michael White

THE Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine, was this week stung into making his first official statement in defence of the £650,000 refurbishment of his official residence — only to have the Opposition reject his explanation as "wholly inadequate".

As ministerial friends started rallying belated support for the embattled Lord Chancellor, ministers and officials also moved to calm fears in Whitehall that a plan to expand Lord Irvine's department to support his special responsibilities was a step towards creating a Department of Justice.

Lord Irvine believes he is the target of a media-driven vendetta to undermine one of Tony Blair's most valued confidants. But the most persistent damage to the reputation of the Prime Minister's legal mentor has arisen from attacks on the programme to restore the Lord Chancellor's apartments in the Palace of Westminster to their mid-Victorian glory.

On Monday these prompted Lord Irvine into issuing his first official statement on the issue: a detailed justification of decisions "taken by the relevant House [of Lords] authorities and not by the Lord Chancellor", he emphasised.

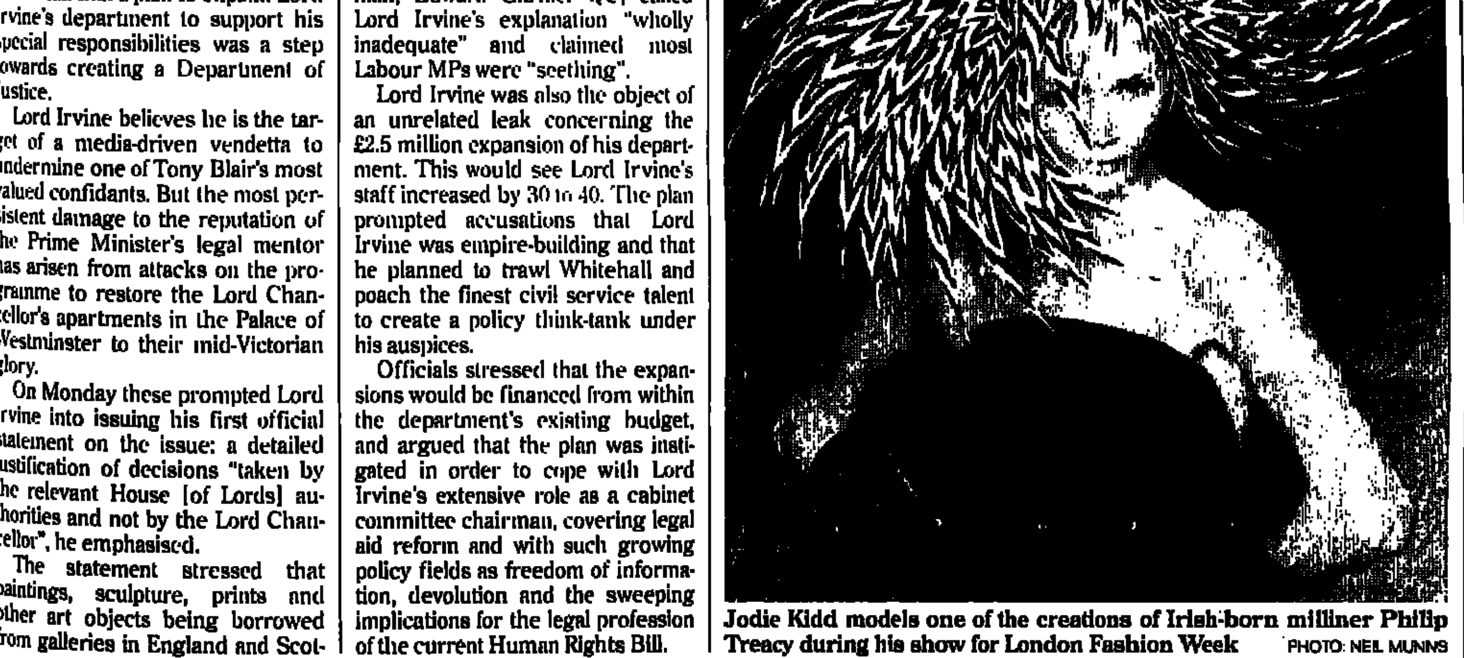
The statement stressed that paintings, sculpture, prints and other art objects being borrowed from galleries in England and Scotland are being taken from the gallery cellars and will soon be on view, thanks to the "substantial public access" being planned.

The Government Chief Whip, Nick Brown, lambasted the attacks on the Lord Chancellor as "out of all proportion". He added: "The Lord Chancellor's mastery of complex detail, his intellectual abilities, and sheer decency are central to the success of this Government."

The Tory legal affairs spokesman, Edward Garnier QC, called Lord Irvine's explanation "wholly inadequate" and claimed most Labour MPs were "seething".

Lord Irvine was also the object of an unrelated leak concerning the £2.5 million expansion of his department. This would see Lord Irvine's staff increased by 30 to 40. The plan prompted accusations that Lord Irvine was empire-building and that he planned to trawl Whitehall and poach the finest civil service talent to create a policy think-tank under his auspices.

Officials stressed that the expansions would be financed from within the department's existing budget, and argued that the plan was instigated in order to cope with Lord Irvine's extensive role as a cabinet committee chairman, covering legal aid reform and with such growing policy fields as freedom of information, devolution and the sweeping implications for the legal profession of the current Human Rights Bill.



Jodie Kidd models one of the creations of Irish-born milliner Philip Treacy during his show for London Fashion Week PHOTO: NEIL MUNNS

Scientists battle over birth of universe

Tim Radford

TWO masters of the universe are in mortal combat over the birth and survival of time itself. Two papers circulating among mathematicians and physicists are wrestling with the problem of why the universe might never end.

On the one hand, the wheelchair-bound cosmologist Stephen Hawking, probably the most famous living scientist, and his Cambridge colleague Neil Turok, argue in a paper to be published in Physics Letters that what happened in the first trillion trillion trillionth of a second of time may dictate an eternity of desolation for the universe.

On the other hand, the Russian physicist Andrei Linde, one of the giants of inflation theory — which tries to explain what happened inside that first small fraction of a second — has circulated a paper saying Hawking and Turok have got it wrong: universes like ours are popping into existence all the time, so there is no point in trying to find a beginning or an end.

At the bottom of the argument is a big problem. All the evidence says the universe has a beginning. So was there a "before" this moment of creation? And will the expansion end?

Ten years ago, in the best-selling A Brief History Of Time, Hawking proposed that the universe exploded from a single point, in which the force of expansion was forever being slowed by the gravitational power of the matter in it. Which would win? Would the universe expand forever? Or would it collapse back on itself?

In the past few months, astronomers have repeatedly proposed that the universe is not dense enough to stop its own expansion. After billions of years, all the galaxies will have faded, but their cinders will go on sailing away from each other for eternity. The paper by Hawking and Turok examines some of Einstein's thinking — and uses pure theory to reach the same conclusion: the future of the universe was decided by the conditions in that first moment of its making.

"They claim they get a cosmology with a low density in a more natural way than other ideas along these lines," said Professor Sir Martin Rees, the Astronomer-Royal. He added that Linde claims that the Hawking and Turok model does not give the right density for the universe.

Both arguments depend on a moment called cosmic inflation, in which a universe popped up from nowhere and expanded far faster than the speed of light, inflating itself. This inflation was a kind of anti-gravity. But, the argument says, since gravity is negative energy, then this anti-gravity must have represented positive energy. Einstein's theories say matter is just frozen energy, so all the stars and galaxies are condensed from the energy manufactured from nothing in this inflationary moment.

The new argument means philosophers now have to think about time having a beginning but no end. It could be worse.

"Linde believes in what he calls eternal inflation," said Sir Martin. "Once you set a universe going, it inflates and sprouts new big bangs all the time. One of Linde's criticisms is that Hawking talks about the initial big bang, but there never really was an initial big bang. Once you set up one, it sprouts an infinite number of big bangs. If that is the case, then the initial conditions Steve worries about are lost in even deeper mists of cosmic history than we expected."

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In Brief

THE Quarantine Abolition Fighting Fund has been granted leave to challenge Britain's quarantine law in the High Court. The group claims the Government is in breach of European Union law which ensures the freedom of movement of goods, which includes cats and dogs.

THE Environment Secretary, John Prescott, announced that 60 per cent of all new homes built in the next 10 years will be on "recycled land" to encourage urban renewal and to defuse growing political disquiet over increasing development in the countryside.

A FORMER SAS soldier was ordered to do 240 hours' community service for carrying out a mock execution during a Sunday service as a favour for a Church of Scotland minister. Matthew Smith, aged 42, pretended to shoot the Reverend Earsley White in a stunt intended to illustrate Mr White's sermon to a congregation of 300 scouts, cubs and their leaders.

THE Home Secretary, Jack Straw, ruled out a new public inquiry into the Hillsborough disaster nine years ago, in which 96 football fans died.

THE MCC, temple of the cricketing establishment, rejected a proposal to end 211 years of male-only membership.

THE Prison Officers' Association voted to take national industrial action if the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, tries to use a Conservative law under which he may use the courts to declare illegal any unilateral industrial action by staff at any one prison. The POA had been led to believe that Labour would restore their right to strike.

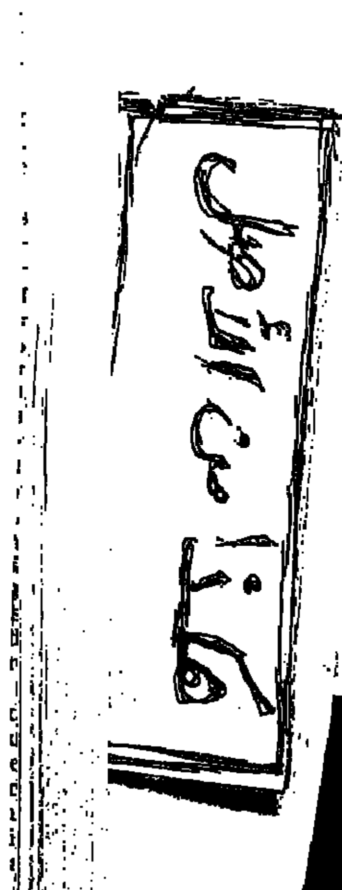
IN an attempt to bring the judicial appointments system into the 20th century, the Lord Chancellor for the first time published national advertisements for the post of High Court judge.

JOHN LLOYD, a 57-year-old Roman Catholic priest, was jailed for 21 months after being found guilty of sexually abusing a teenage girl minutes after he had baptised her.

CARDBOARD CITY, the shanty town for the homeless under London's Waterloo Station, is to be swept away and replaced by a 500-seat cinema.

SIR DAVID CROUCH, the former Conservative MP and pillar of the Tory Reform Group, has died, aged 78.

HENRY LIVINGS, the playwright, author and raconteur whose surreal farces such as Kelly's Eye and Eh? established him as the mightiest of Pennine writers, has died, aged 68.



Lesbian couple lose test case on job perks

Clare Dyer

A LESBIAN couple lost a test case over access to perks at work last week, dealing a severe blow to the campaign for equal rights for gays in the workplace.

The European Court of Justice in Luxembourg ruled that South West Trains did not breach European equality laws in refusing a railway worker, Lisa Grant, travel concessions for her partner, Jill Percey.

Campaigners had high hopes of a win because the court's Advocate General had strongly backed their case in an interim opinion last September. In more than 85 per cent of cases the judges follow the Advocate General's opinion.

In addition, a European Court ruling in 1996 that sex discrimination laws cover transsexuals had been seen as a strong pointer towards the adoption of equal rights for gays.

The judgment throws into doubt the chances of success for Terry Perkins, a sailor sacked by the Royal Navy in 1995 for being gay, because the judges explicitly stated that European Community law did not cover sexual orientation. He is awaiting a date for a hearing.

A victory for Ms Grant, aged 30, and Ms Percey, 38, would have had major implications for Britain's employment, pensions and social security systems. The Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Booth QC, argued Ms Grant's case, but both the British and French governments fielded lawyers to oppose the claim.

Ms Grant said: "It is now up to national governments to change legislation. We set out to try to raise awareness that there is discrimination in the workplace and we have done what we set out to do."

Ms Grant, a booking clerk, filed an equal pay claim with Southampton industrial tribunal after South West Trains rejected her application for free or cheap travel for Ms Percey, a nurse. She claimed that company rules limiting the perk to spouses or opposite-sex partners in a "meaningful relationship" for at least two years breached European equal pay laws, which cover perks as well as salary. The tribunal referred the case to Luxembourg.

The European Court held that there was no direct discrimination on grounds of sex because a male gay couple would also have been denied the concession. South West Trains successfully claimed its policy was not discrimination on grounds of sex, but on grounds of sexual orientation, which was not covered by European Community law.

The judges held that the transsexual case covered only a change from one sex to the other and not sexual orientation. "Community law as it stands at present does not cover discrimination based on sexual orientation," they ruled.

The judges said the EC had not yet adopted rules treating gay relationships as equal to marriage or stable opposite-sex partnerships. Nor did most member states treat them as equivalent.

Ear marks out serial burglar

John Ezard

CALVIN Sewell is no great shakes at the technology of modern housebreaking. But he possesses one gift which thieves through the ages would have envied. He has the ears of a cat.

Just by pressing an ear to a door or window — and keeping it there for some time — he can tell infallibly whether anyone is at home.

He has proved this with at least 13 immaculate burglaries, netting £4,000 worth of property. Mr Sewell, aged 25, of Balham, south London, also stole a Snoopy dog.

Last week, however, thief-tracing technology caught up with him. Even Judge David Elfer paid tribute to his "long and sometimes very successful" career. But — trapped by his earprints — Mr Sewell was sentenced to a year in prison after admitting five burglary charges.

He is the first criminal in Britain to have a mould taken of his ears by police. Prosecuting, Simon Medland told Southwark crown court that his break-ins were carried out in either Clapham or Vauxhall, south London.

As usual, forensic staff dusted for fingerprints. But "a peculiar aspect of an otherwise ordinary series of burglaries" quickly became apparent — the profusion of what turned out to be other prints.

Mr Sewell would have been a suspect anyway because of previous convictions dating back to 1989, Mr Medland said. But the earprints — which are unique in each individual — led police to make an acetate-based mould of him.

The perfect match led quickly to charges. Judge Elfer told him he must be all too well aware of the misery his crimes caused.

Outside court, Detective Constable Alan Hodgson said he would encourage fellow officers to watch for similar giveaway prints.

Mr Sewell is already serving a sentence of three years and nine months imposed earlier for other burglaries. This, plus his new sentence, gives him ample time to consider the use of an ear trumpet.

Fans learn jeers sans frontières

John Duncan and Jon Henley in Paris

IF ENGLAND return from the 1998 World Cup in France this summer *"malades comme des perroquets"* then at least one group of Midlands football fans will be able to say *"nous ne regrettons rien"*. Wolverhampton Wanderers last week announced that they will be host to cheap French lessons to help fans intending to go to France to distinguish their Arsenal from their Elbe.

The seven-week course — Ici Mon Fils, Sur Ma Tête — starts on March 5, costs £50 and is offered in association with Bilston community college in the West Midlands. Tutors will teach themed modules in a bar at Wolves's Molineux ground and then a match will be shown on *la télé*.

The course will eschew Émile Zola in favour of Gianfranco, and former West Ham striker Paul Goddard is more likely to come up in conversation than French film-maker Jean-Luc, but the organisers deny the course is frivolous.

"We are combining fun with a serious approach to language learning so that fans learn footballing French," a college spokesman, Terry Guy, said. "We are being realistic and teaching fans what they may need to know."

Students will learn translations of such choice phrases as: "I say, referee, I regret to inform you that your vision is impaired" and "What does my tattoo say?"

Dave Price, aged 38, a Birmingham City fan, has signed up. "The best part will be singing a few songs in French — it wouldn't seem the same in English — so we are learning the French for 'Keep right on till the end of the road' [the Birmingham City song] and even the rugby classic 'Swing low, sweet chariot'."

The French are not great terrace singers. Their supporters' association had to launch a nationwide competition to find a chant for France 98 two weeks ago. The centre of crowd chanting is generally accepted as Marseille, where England play Tunisia on June 15.

Given the perennial problems with referees during the World Cup, students may care to note that the French traditionally yell *"Aux chiottes, l'arbitre"* (Down the bog, referee) when a decision goes against them.



A demonstrator puts his best foot forward on the chicken farm site at Croxton PHOTO: GRAHAM TURNER

Chickens duck flying picket ban

Seumas Milne

LAST year British Airways cabin staff discovered the power of the "mass sickie" when threatened with the sack if they took industrial action. Last week Magnet Kitchen workers, fired 18 months ago for going on strike, unveiled a new industrial weapon in their battle for reinstatement: the chicken farm.

It was set up by the sacked workers from Darlington and a group of redundant Derbyshire miners on land near the Cambridgeshire mansion of Alan Bowkett, chief executive of Magnet's parent company Berisford, to evade threats of legal action for secondary picketing. Lawyers had advised them it was the only way of getting round the legislation.

Under placards warning "the chickens are coming home to roost", and video surveillance by Mr Bowkett's security guards, the farm was officially opened with three hens on a site rented by the GMB union in the village of Croxton near St Neots.

Mr Bowkett — who last year got a £124,000 pay rise — was described as a "fat cat of the highest order" by the GMB national secretary, Phil Davies. The chicken farm has been named "Camp Bowkett".

The opening was marred when one of the chickens escaped and was run over on the A428. The two survivors were entrusted to a neighbouring farmer until more secure coops are delivered and the sacked workers have arranged an official farming permit.

A spokesman for Berisford said the chicken farm was a "childish stunt" and "low-grade publicity seeking" which demonstrated that the GMB had "no serious interest in tackling the issues or engaging in a sensible debate". Mr Bowkett was considering his legal options.

Terry Buckeraitis, a former president of the Derbyshire NUM who joined the farm launch, said the Magnet workers had supported Derbyshire miners during the 1984/85 pit strike and the former pitmen were now "repaying a debt of honour".

Connery denied knighthood

Lawrence Donegan

THE actor and Scottish Nationalist supporter, Sean Connery, was at the centre of a political row last weekend after it emerged he had been denied a knighthood because of remarks he made about domestic violence towards women.

With the Scottish National Party insisting a concerted effort was under way to smear the Edinburgh-born actor, government sources confirmed that Mr Connery had been recommended for the honour by the previous Tory administration but refuted claims that his name was withdrawn by Scottish Office ministers shortly after taking office last May because of his political affiliations.

"Politics had nothing to do with it," one source said. "There is the question of his attitude towards domestic violence . . . Mr Connery's past remarks on this issue are dubious, to say the very least. In addition, what sort of message would it have sent out if a Labour government, newly in office, was to hand out a knighthood to a well-known tax exile?"

It is understood ministers were disturbed by remarks made by the 67-year-old actor in an interview with Vanity Fair magazine in 1993, during which he appeared to suggest that an "open-handed slap" was justified in dealing with certain domestic situations.

"Sometimes there are women who take it to the wire. That's what they're looking for, the ultimate confrontation. They want a smack . . . an open-handed slap is justified if all alternatives fail and there has been plenty of warning. If a woman is a bitch, or hysterical, or bloody-minded continually, then I'd do it," Mr Connery said.

The former James Bond star was recommended for a knighthood for services to the arts. But after last May's election, objections were made by the new Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar and the Scottish arts minister, Sam Galbraith.

The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, said that the remarks had been taken out of context. "What is happening is a spin-doctoring attempt to smear Sean Connery and to conceal the simple truth — that Scotland's most famous son has been discriminated against because of his politics."

Connery: was he the victim of political discrimination?

Cannabis 'is safer than alcohol or cigarettes'

Tim Radford

UNITED NATIONS health chiefs suppressed a finding that cannabis is safer than either alcohol or tobacco, according to a report last week.

A World Health Organisation report published in December was to have concluded that even if cannabis were consumed on the same scale as cigarettes and whisky, it would probably still be safer than either, but the passage was scrapped at the last moment, says the magazine New Scientist.

The comparison with alcohol and tobacco, the suppressed passage said, was made "not to promote one drug over another but rather to minimise double standards that have operated in appraising the health effects of cannabis".

The disputed passage was leaked to New Scientist after it was withdrawn, reportedly in response to pressure from the United States National Institute on Drug Abuse and the UN International Drug Control Programme. It says: "In developed societies cannabis appears to play little role in injuries caused by violence, as does alcohol." It also says there is good evidence that alcohol can harm foetal development, while the evidence that cannabis can harm foetal development is "far from conclusive".

The WHO report does admit that, like heavy drinking, smoking marijuana can produce psychosis in susceptible people. It also says chronic cannabis smoking may contribute to cancers of the aerodigestive tract.

But one lung disease researcher, Donald Tashkin of the University of California at Los Angeles, found that volunteers who smoked three joints a day had much the same lung capacity and function as those who smoked none. However, dope smokers inhale deeply and hold the smoke in the lungs, so they got a large dose of potentially damaging tar. One in five reported suffering from phlegm and bouts of bronchitis.

The leaked UN report comes at a time of renewed pressure to think again about drug policies. A House of Lords committee is to begin its own inquiry into decriminalisation and former chiefs of both Scotland Yard and Merseyside drug squads have called for legalisation.

Marijuana is widely used as a therapy for Aids sufferers in the states of California and Arizona, which have ruled that doctors may prescribe the drug, in defiance of federal law. The drug has been known to relieve the symptoms of glaucoma, and to suppress the pain felt by multiple sclerosis sufferers. It was widely used in childbirth in the last century, and it has also been recommended as a palliative for those undergoing chemotherapy.

NHS waiting list nears record 1.3m

David Brindle

MINISTERS last week stopped blaming the Conservatives' legacy for the continuing rise in hospital waiting lists as the Health Secretary, Frank Dobson, admitted that the latest figures were bad.

As the waiting list for England rose by 4.5 per cent in a quarter to a new record approaching 1.3 million, Mr Dobson said: "I have got to take some responsibility for them."

However, the increase was predictable because he had ordered the NHS to give priority to emergency and urgent cases this winter. "If you are dealing with the emergencies, you can't generally speaking put as much effort into the waiting-list cases."

The figures, dated at December 31, are doubly embarrassing for the Government. One of Labour's five "early pledges", made before the general election, was to "cut NHS waiting lists by treating an extra 100,000 patients".

In fact, the total list has risen by almost 108,000 since the election. Moreover the number of patients waiting more than a year is rising rapidly — up 19 per cent in a quarter to 68,300 at the end of December. Of those, 974 had been queuing more than 18 months, in breach of the Patient's Charter guarantee.

Mr Dobson insisted that the Government would meet its promise to reduce the list to below the figure it had inherited. That would have been achieved "at the next election". The NHS would also meet the commitment he gave last November that, by the end of March, no patient would have been waiting longer than 18 months.

A snapshot survey last month had shown that 80 per cent of those waiting 18 months already had treatment dates before the end of March. "That is the kind of progress we are committed to achieving," he said.

The figures will be used by health ministers to press the Treasury for more money for the NHS next year. Reports have suggested they are asking for an extra £500 million, which would make a total of £2 billion a year more since the election.

Dr Sandy Macara, chairman of the British Medical Association, said: "The fact that the figures are rising despite the best efforts of NHS staff, despite the extra winter money and despite the mild weather, simply highlights the urgent need to improve the financial base of the service."

John Maples, the shadow health secretary, said the next figures would "worsen considerably". He added: "By May, Labour will have been running the NHS for nearly a year and will have no excuses for the appalling distress and suffering that these waits are causing for patients."



Consigned to history . . . Production line workers sign the last Rover 100 — the small car originally known as the Austin Mini Metro — before it was sent to the Heritage Trust museum. The Metro, launched in 1980, rescued British Leyland, which was struggling to survive in the face of competition from overseas PHOTO: JAMIE JONES

Electoral laws 'violate free speech'

Clare Dyer

THE Government will be forced to change Britain's electoral laws after a European Court of Human Rights ruling last week that they violated an anti-abortion campaigner's right to free speech.

The Strasbourg judges said laws banning ordinary citizens' spending money to promote or denigrate candidates in election campaigns breached article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of expression.

The decision was a victory for the leading anti-abortion campaigner Phyllis Bowman, executive director of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children. She said: "For years candidates have deliberately deceived electors [when speaking about] how they felt about abortion. Our leaflet said how they would vote or how they had voted."

Mrs Bowman, aged 72, was charged under the 1983 Representation of the People Act with a "corrupt electoral practice" by spending £10,000 on producing election material without authorisation in Halifax, West Yorkshire, in 1992. Mrs Bowman, who had twice before been convicted for similar offences, was acquitted on the third occasion because the case was brought outside the 12-month time limit.

She took her case to Strasbourg, claiming damages for the "stigma, stress and anxiety" she has suffered, plus legal costs, as a result of being prosecuted. Her claim for damages was rejected, but she was awarded £1,633.64 for legal costs in Britain and £25,000 for Strasbourg costs.

The judges said the 1983 law did not directly restrain freedom of expression, but it limited to £5 the amount of money "unauthorised persons" could spend on publications and "other means of communication" that might promote a candidate during an election.

The limit did not prevent Mrs Bowman from campaigning freely at other times. "However, this would not, in the court's view, have served her purpose in publishing the leaflets, which was, at the very least, to inform the people of Halifax about the three candidates' voting records and attitudes on abortion, during the critical period when their minds were focused on their choice of representative," the judgment said.

"The court was, moreover, not convinced that . . . she had access to other effective channels of communication." The result was that the law was "a total barrier to Mrs Bowman publishing information with a view to influencing the voters of Halifax in favour of an anti-abortion candidate".

Dyslexia is hereditary

Sarah Hall

SCIENTISTS last week heralded a breakthrough after unearthing further proof that the reading and spelling disability dyslexia is a genetic condition.

A common strand of DNA has been located in parents and children suffering from the condition — proving it is hereditary.

"We think this is a breakthrough," said John Stein, professor of physiology at Oxford university, who, with Tony Monaco of the Wellcome Trust Centre for Human Genetics, is conducting the research. "It makes it quite clear that dyslexia is a hereditary condition and not purely psychological."

Prof Stein and his colleague carried out DNA tests on more than 400 people in 90 families with one dyslexic parent and at least two dyslexic children.

They found the approximate site of a gene associated with dyslexia, and then discovered that that strand of DNA was more commonly found in members of the family affected by the condition.

The researchers, whose work builds on American studies, believe the section of chromosomes linked to the condition is close to the genes controlling immunity. That suggests there may be something unusual with the parent or child's immune system, and there could be a susceptibility to attacks from antibodies, which could be a cause of the condition, Prof Stein said.

It is thought that up to 10 per cent of the Western world's population may suffer from dyslexia.

"If we could develop a very simple test to look for this genetic linkage in five- or six-year-olds . . . then there's a good chance of alleviating the problem," Prof Stein said.

"Even if we cannot alleviate it, if the children know they have this condition and are not stupid, it will make them less depressed."

Jury may be out in fraud trials

ENGLAND'S 900-year-old jury system could be abandoned under a review of serious fraud trials being carried out by the Home Office, *writes Dan Atkinson.*

The Home Office said last week that millions of pounds could be cut out of the Government's legal costs by dumping juries, but its green paper also warned that denying fraud suspects the right to a jury hearing would "represent a significant departure from current practice".

The proposals follow alarm at costs in serious-fraud cases and suggestions that ordinary jurors are incapable of following allegations of complex financial crime. Alarm peaked in September 1996, when Mr Justice Buckley ruled there would be no second trial of Kevin Maxwell in relation to the collapse of his father's commercial empire.

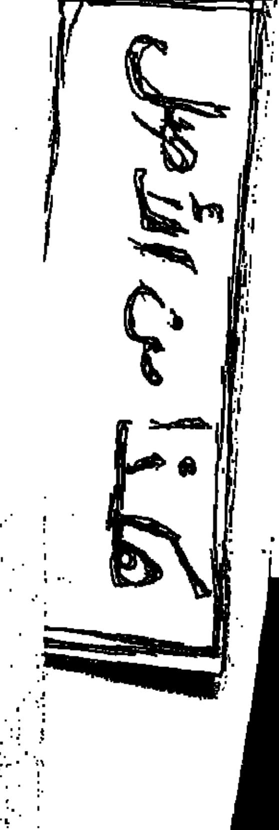
The then Serious Fraud Office director, George Staple, said that, taken with an earlier ruling ordering prosecutors to chop big trials into several smaller ones to prevent jurors becoming overburdened, the Maxwell judgment effectively made it impossible to try in full allegations of serious fraud.

Last week's green paper envisages perhaps 80-85 cases a year — including all those prosecuted by the SFO — qualifying for trial without jury, should Parliament decide to abandon the jury system in complex cases. But a smaller number would actually be tried without a jury.

Costs could be slashed by perhaps a quarter, the Home Office estimates, in line with the expected time saving of 25 days for every 100 days of trial time under the jury system — a saving of nearly £500,000 on the 131-day Maxwell case. The green paper forms part of a general review of white-collar crime.

Under the proposals, the judge would decide at a pre-trial hearing if the case would be heard by a jury or by any new system.

The Crown and defence teams could appeal against the judge's decision before the case got under way.



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Kofi Annan brings back a deal that will boost the UN

THE AGREEMENT reached in Baghdad at the weekend by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan is a significant achievement — even before the fine print analysis begins. If it is accepted by the Security Council, it will have prevented a war whose consequences were dangerously unpredictable, yet it will have done so without conceding peace at any price. It should deliver a deal which, on the evidence of Monday, has no fatal defects and presents a reasonable chance of satisfying the interests of all parties to it. It is a tribute to Mr Annan — and an important boost to the organisation which he represents — that this has been realised through his efforts. Indeed it could not have been achieved without him. It is also a mark of an agreement more likely to last that it allows all parties concerned to claim that they have emerged with their objectives and principles intact.

President Clinton and his advisers need have no problem in claiming success — if (as we hope) they concur with the agreement. The threat of force by two members of the Security Council was evidently a very important factor, however much Iraq may now deny it. As Mr Annan told the press conference in Baghdad on Monday morning, you can do a lot with diplomacy, but a lot more if it is backed up by "firmness and force".

Saddam Hussein has agreed to deliver what he refused to when the crisis began: was that not what it was all about? There will be details in the package with which Washington will be less than happy. But the three key issues on which assurance was sought — unfettered access by the inspectors, the right to repeat visits, and the absence of a time limit — have apparently been safeguarded. If the purpose was to use force as an adjunct to diplomacy and not vice versa, Mr Clinton should be able to insist that it had its effect.

Saddam Hussein also emerges in an advantageous position: this may seem an unjust outcome for a thuggish dictator with no redeeming features, but success in negotiations does not imply moral approbation. For a leader so often characterised as psychotic, insane or blind to normal argument, he has negotiated quite rationally from his own perspective. The crucial concession on the absence of any time limit was made in classic negotiating style right at the last moment. He will benefit from the relief of his own people, and his neighbours, that the war threat has been lifted. If he is seen to have made concessions, that will hardly harm his image either. Of course the agreement has worsened the chances of any internal challenge to his leadership — but the United States and its Gulf allies have never shown enthusiasm for venturing into that area of the unknown.

The British government may also present its own efforts in a favourable light. The British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, was quick to do so on Monday morning when he suggested that Britain had played a leading role in assembling the Security Council mandate which allowed Mr Annan to go to Baghdad. Britain also appears to have had a restraining effect on American impatience with the diplomatic track, both by asking hard questions about the purpose of any military action, and by insisting that such action would have to be preceded by some kind of new Security Council resolution. If indeed Britain has played its traditional role of working from within to soften the rough edge of US policy, it has kept this well concealed. But we may expect to hear more about it as the crisis recedes.

Will the agreement, once held up to more searching light, really come up to expectations? There are already clues in the remarks on Monday from Mr Annan and Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, at their joint press conference. Mr Annan said that it would satisfy both the "spirit" and the "intent" of the relevant UN resolutions — implying that some details may be varied. Mr Aziz stressed that it was a "balanced" document which had been concluded in the hope that sanctions would be lifted soon.

Clearly the deal will embody some of the "flexibility" for which Mr Annan first called last month when he made his first diplomatic intervention. But there is nothing wrong with being flexible if it secures compliance. The burden of proof will rest with Saddam Hussein to deliver. That means that the inspectors must be able to enter the presidential palaces with full authority, no matter how many "men in suits" may accompany them. Mr Aziz claimed on Monday that there was no problem about this — indeed that a full inspection would reveal no weapons programme and therefore hasten final resolution of the whole process.

There is a big gap between word and deed, but Saddam may be more likely to deliver what has now been committed to writing if — in the phrase widely used on Monday — there is some "light at the end of the tunnel". Here too Mr Cook may have given an important signal last Sunday when he suggested that sanctions could be lifted "in the fairly near future".

The person in this whole affair with the strongest claim to our approval is Kofi Annan. He waited his time on the sidelines until he judged the moment was right. He has handled the prickly constituents on both sides with skill and tact, while insisting on the integrity of the UN and its resolutions. It is a rare negotiator who can operate in such contentious middle ground: no previous UN secretary-general of recent years would have managed to do it. By bringing his text in person back to the UN, Mr Annan is also quite legitimately doing his best to ensure a positive reception for it while leaving the final decision to the Security Council.

If he succeeds, the UN Secretary-General will have done something to restore the authority of the United Nations, which was in danger of being bypassed by unilateral military action. This may in turn allow some of the good intentions declared after the 1990-91 Gulf war to be addressed again in the Middle East. Such as reviving the peace process, moving towards democratic governance, curbing the arms race, and putting an end to military threats from any quarter. These are remote visions at the moment, but they are surely worth encouraging after so many bad dreams.

Big bang begets big mysteries

IN THE beginning, according to the second sentence of Genesis, the Earth was without form and void. Not a bad description of a process that during the past 30 years scientists have made mind-boggling progress in understanding. We now know that the universe started from the nuclear explosion of a minute "virtual particle" of infinite density — the nearest thing to nothingness without becoming nothing.

The big mystery is what exactly it was that happened during the first one thousandth of a second (diplomatically unmentioned by Genesis) when the future direction and shape of the universe was determined. And the most critical part, according to Stephen Hawking and his Cambridge colleague Neil Turok this week (writing in Physics Letters) is what happened in the first trillion trillion trillionth of a second. This may dictate whether the universe will go on expanding forever or whether (as rival scientists still argue) it will decelerate by enough to be caught by gravitational forces that will compel it to contract — an implosion that would take it over billions of years back to the minute particle whence we all came. ("Dust thou wert and to dust thou wilt return.")

It is difficult enough for the lay person to grasp the fractions involved (not many school rulers measure trillion trillion trillionths), let alone what all this might be trying to tell us. Fortunately, for harmony among humankind the rival theories are sufficiently broad-church to house both atheists and believers: the former argue that we now have a complete explanation of existence and need look no further, the latter that such a miracle of physics must have had an external cause.

The Hawking argument that time has a beginning but no end will make posterity sleep more soundly and ought in a small way to enhance the virtues of peacemaking and environmental control since our stewardship of the Earth can no longer be seen as temporary. Philosophers will doubtless argue over whether it is possible to talk of a notion of existence before the big bang even though scientists argue that is when time and space began. Above all, it ought to give us all a sense of infinite humility at the awesomeness of all that has been happening.

That the entire universe erupted from a minute speck, to which it could return but probably won't, will surely remain the mystery among mysteries however much scientists agree that they have found the complete explanation.

A salute to Europe's last real statesman

Hugo Young

RECEIVING the freedom of the City of London, he was being blessed with something between an honorary knighthood and a virtual peerage: an immensely merited award for the only European statesman still on active service. But around the event swirled consolations for those who would have preferred it not to happen. They could persuade themselves that this was the honouring of yesterday's man, whose climactic project is, in the country to which he had come, on the wane.

In Germany, after all, his future does not look good. The German economy has ceased to be the model. Unemployment is high, growth is faltering, German social welfare is widely scorned elsewhere. The reunified territories are the seat of poverty and increasing ethnic violence. Chancellor Kohl himself, facing an election in the autumn, is in deep trouble. Many observers are backing him to lose it. The freedom of the City was perhaps a consolation prize, acceptable as such to Eurosceptics who thirst to diminish him.

In Britain, equally, he has less resonance than he used to. A year ago, Tony Blair was being perched on his knee in the Tory election ads, but now Mr Blair has pulled out of Kohl's project, economic and monetary union, for the duration. Blair's discourse makes it ever plainer that he has become a sceptic, in the strict sense of being a doubter about whether European Monetary Union (EMU) will be economically viable.

Whatever happens when EMU starts, there's now no trace of a possibility that Britain will enter in the early years. Chairing the meeting that starts it in May, Mr Blair can be no more than a helpful eunuch at the court of the inner Europeans. Was this, therefore, a meeting between two brands of impotence: the fading Chancellor and the self-mutilated Prime Minister? In the case of the German, that estimate would be quite false. Kohl remains an extraordinary figure.

When I saw him in the autumn, he exuded, at the age of 67, fierce and jovial energy. Though he says the election campaign will be the hardest of his life, he's quite certain EMU will not lose it for him. His coalition may, of course, be beaten — although the SPD are a fragile force, feebly led, and may not be strong enough to take advantage of the CDU's manifest unpopularity — but it will not be "Europe" that beats him, and this for a reason that exposes the gulf between the politics of Britain and of Germany.

It's well attested that the euro is unpopular in Germany. One poll, recording 70 per cent against, showed it to be more unpopular than it is in Britain. Kohl, the euro's undisputed father, should therefore be in for a hammering. But he may not be. The German attitude accepts the inevitability of the euro, but shows signs of believing that the old man is the only leader to be trusted with the task of shepherding aside the beloved Deutschmark. He's the indispensable curator of his own resented creation. Far from being further proof of Germans' spineless submission to their élites, this will be construed, if Kohl wins, as the ultimate accolade for the quality he has provided on great questions for 16 years: leadership such as Britain, on the issue of Europe, has not had since the war.

His talents partly lie in the practicalities of politics. No other leader in the world can have a more detailed appreciation of the strengths and frailties of his peer-group. Whether on Capitol Hill or in the polling stations of Lower Saxony, Kohl knows the state of the count. A leader who proves inadequate in this department, like Jacques Chirac, fatally mistiming an election, is thereby lowered in his esteem. A leader who owns the count by a massive majority, like Tony Blair, is greeted as one to whom all democratic leaders should show their respect.

But Kohl's impetus is also visionary. Along with the finer points of the Italian voting system come the lessons in history. The Chancellor's table-talk begins with the second world war and ends with German reunification. Memories of his own youth, breaking across the Franco-German border, never die. He was happy, in the early post-war days, to salute the *tricolore* three times for every once he saluted the German flag. Now, his visits to what was East Germany elicit his powerful sympathetic imagination for the drama of democracy, and the people who still cannot get used to what it means for them.

Such talk of history is terribly unfashionable in Britain. Its message provokes only discomfort, so much so that many people are inclined to discount its relevance now. When he spoke of his desire to end war for ever in Europe, Kohl was derided, by more than one minister in the last British government, as a warmonger for his very mention of the subject. It was as if these Tories believed that the bloody history of the nation state was a malign distraction from the truly serious business of maintaining the nation state, come what may, in the modern era.

LAST WEEK the City, whether consciously or not, celebrated the opposite proposition. It was a rare occasion when the City showed itself wiser than the politicians. To have received the German chancellor in this way was not only a merciful forgetting of the last war, it was a demonstration of confidence in the sort of Europe he stands for: a rare display of largeness from a British institution, in a country whose politicians, even in a government honestly dedicated to transforming relations with Europe, find such largeness frightening.

What is the test by which Mr Blair might fulfil the hopes Kohl undoubtedly reposes in him? Perhaps we'll know he has passed when he goes to the House of Commons and either proposes an action, or disclaims one, for the reason that it will be good, or bad, for European unity. That would be a revolutionary moment. I don't believe any prime minister has ever done it. It's a thought too alarming to contemplate, for leaders of a country whose entire stance in the world has nevertheless been rooted, for 25 years, in belonging to Europe. But it's the challenge that Kohl, vibrantly present and far from dead, laid down last week.

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The Washington Post

Annan's Deal Puts Clinton on the Spot

Dan Morgan

HAVING assembled a mighty force to strike Iraq, Clinton administration officials this week began grappling with the potentially awkward question of how to react if a United Nations-brokered diplomatic deal with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein meets some, but not all, US demands.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright received a "short but not comprehensive briefing" from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on arrangements that he worked out during two days of intense negotiations with Saddam and top Iraqi officials, according to a State Department spokesman. "We're awaiting the details before we can discuss them," he added.

Despite assurances from an Annan spokesman in Baghdad that the agreement was "positive", the absence of specifics gave rise to concerns within the administration that Annan might have agreed to conditions on access to suspected Iraqi weapons sites that will be unacceptable to the United States.

President Clinton and British Prime Minister Tony Blair spoke by telephone twice last Sunday and agreed "there can be no concessions" to Iraq over weapons inspections, according to a British spokesman.

In a series of interviews on television, top Clinton administration officials stressed repeatedly that Saddam must allow "full and unfettered access" to Iraqi sites by qualified UN inspectors, without conditions and with no limits on the number of visits. Any deviation from this requirement, which is written into UN resolutions, would be unacceptable and would leave the military option open, they indicated.

"He [Saddam] has to back down," Albright said on ABC's This Week. "There's no question. He has to reverse course."



Masked Palestinians burn US and British flags in the West Bank at the weekend PHOTO: ABBAS MOUMANI

Albright acknowledged "it is possible that [Annan] will come back with something that we don't like, in which case we will pursue our national interests."

Such an outcome, sources said, could be the worst possible one for the Clinton administration, further eroding international support for US military action while deepening a split over Iraq policy at home.

The Clinton administration already must balance a complex — and conflicting — mix of domestic and foreign pressures as it weighs its next steps in Iraq. Administration sources said that the job could be made even more difficult if Annan returns with "a deal that gets us 95 per cent of the loaf."

Officials worry that such a result could make it far more difficult, diplomatically, for the US to defend airstrikes, yet could enable Saddam to continue hiding weapons of mass destruction, or even free him to rebuild his arsenal after the immediate threat has passed.

Internationally, only Britain and Australia have joined the US-led military build-up in the Persian Gulf. Clinton enjoys considerable support at home for strong military action against Iraq, but a Newsweek poll released last week showed minimal support for limited airstrikes. Thirty-nine per cent favored the diplomatic approach.

The divisions in US opinion were made plain to President Clinton when he and Hillary Rodham Clinton attended services at the Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington. Inside, Bishop Felton May urged the president to face up to "the bullies of the world". But when the Clintons walked out, several dozen protesters chanted, "Mr. Bill, thou shall not kill."

It is clear that the widened UN role over recent days carries potential political dangers for Clinton.

"It is ridiculous for us to make a serious matter of national interest hostage to negotiations conducted by the secretary general of the United Nations," said William Kristol, a conservative commentator who was chief of staff to former vice president Dan Quayle. "Nothing good is going to come of this. Saddam Hussein is going to win a very big victory this week."

But Albright denied the Annan mission had disrupted US policy.

"It is my understanding [that Annan] will come back and report to the Security Council, and then the Security Council will discuss it. We obviously have a veto there. And we are part of that process. If we don't like it, we will make that very clear," she said.

Fujimori's One-Man Fight Against El Nino

Anthony Faiola in Ica, Peru

AMID the stench of stagnant flood water, President Alberto Fujimori, flanked in the sweltering night by three security men packing pistols and flashlights, pushed his way through a mass of humanity toward the overflowing riverbank. Clad in blue jeans and Caterpillar work boots, he leaped onto a mound of mud, took a moment to assess the situation, then belted out orders to men fixing broken dikes.

"No, not that way!" Fujimori yelled over the din of a roaring river in what was, until recently, a desert city on Peru's arid central coast. But that was before the arrival of the weather phenomenon known as El Nino, which has battered Peru perhaps more than any other country on the globe. El Nino has caused a nationwide crisis of freak floods and mudslides, leaving more than 100 dead and hundreds of thousands homeless — and giving Fujimori a new lease on political life. The ultimate crisis president, who gained world fame last year by directing the assault that took back the Japanese ambassador's home in Lima from terrorists, has found himself once again in his element, so to speak.

Fujimori, 58, is the consummate control freak, a bookish professor who has risen to become a president with a penchant for derring-do. He took visible pleasure in the Japanese ambassadorial residence when walking among the bodies of terrorists whom his commandos, on his orders, had mowed down only moments before. He is the same man who sent MiG fighter planes toward the Ecuadoran border even as Peru and its neighbor were negotiating a territorial dispute. Fujimori, the first man of Japanese descent to hold a presidency outside Japan, is, to sum it up, a Peruvian Patton without the uniform — a man who insists on being in charge.

"You've got to put big rocks here," shouted Fujimori, a trained engineer and mathematician. "Not just [dirt]. It won't be enough to hold. Move the big rocks here! Now!"

"Mr President!" called out an old woman. "With your help, we will survive!"

That, at least, is the impression Fujimori has tried to create in the midst of El Nino's assault on Peru, the nation at ground zero in the path of the chaotic weather pattern. After flinging his weight against guerrilla movements, opponents in congress and even his own military, Fujimori this time has thrown himself into a one-man struggle against nature. He has seized control of the relief effort here, travelling to disaster sites almost daily. And his popularity, which plummeted in recent months when he was perceived to be curbing democracy, is rising with the flood waters.

Forty-eight hours on the road with Fujimori, from the Ecuadoran border to the southern desert region, offered an extraordinary look at a controversial leader who is overseeing minute details of the national rescue effort, and without whose presence the undertaking seems often to come unhinged. For good or ill, he is directing almost everything, right down to calculating the number of potatoes needed in communal kitchens.

Fujimori's zeal has brought scathing criticism from those who say he may be acting chiefly in pursuit of personal glory. After a dike is fixed, for example, or shelters for the hordes of newly homeless are in place, a sign usually pops up explaining that residents have the office of the presidency to thank. "He has used El Nino for political reasons," said Harold Forsyth, an opposition congressman. "He's doing it all for the cameras."

But others, especially the poorest people in devastated towns, cheer him as a president who isn't afraid to get his hands dirty. Six months ago, his public approval rating fell to 27 per cent after he took steps to consolidate his power, removing judges from the constitutional tribunal who said he could not seek a third term. But polls now show his approval rating at 42 per cent in Lima and higher in areas deluged by El Nino.

"What do they want me to do, stay in the government palace with my tie and suit?" Fujimori asked aboard the presidential plane en route to inspect flood damage in the northern town of Tumbes. "No, no, no. I won't do it. They can talk about me all they want, but I'm the one with dirty boots making sure we are managing this problem. Everyone who is criticizing me isn't out here — it's me. I am the one fighting El Nino."

Find a Way To Help Democracy

OPINION
Fred Hiatt

CHAIRMAN Jesse Helms, always courtly when Secretary of State Madeleine Albright comes calling, opened a recent Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing with what he thought would be a softball question. Two of Asia's democratic heroes, Kim Dae-jung of South Korea and Martin Lee of Hong Kong, have argued that Asia's current economic crisis highlights the need for more democracy in the region, he said. Would Madame Secretary associate herself with that view?

Not a tough one, you might think. But Madame Secretary wouldn't associate herself with that view. She hemmed and hawed. Of course, she did believe in democracy, she allowed. But she was very concerned at this time about the financial crisis. And after all, she said, "In Indonesia, we have — there's an election coming up."

Well, Indonesia has an election coming up about the same way Leonid Brezhnev used to subject himself to the judgment of the Soviet people. President Suharto, in power since 1966, will be the only candidate. And in case that leaves too much room for error, the only voters will be 1,000 electors, most of them handpicked by, yes, Suharto.

Albright knows this perfectly well. Her answer was no mistake but an accurate reflection of US policy, which, despite rhetoric to the contrary, has been surprisingly flaccid when it comes to the promotion of democracy.

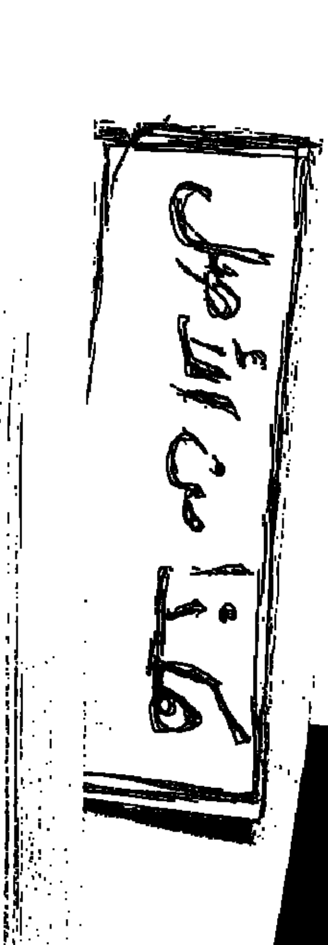
Indonesia's financial crisis results not just from bankers' mistakes but from a wildly corrupt system in which the rulers aren't held accountable and the governed have no way to make themselves heard.

Such a system can't be reformed overnight, and few people are suggesting that Albright march into Suharto's office to demand his resignation. But the US could insist on political reforms that would allow the emergence of democratic institutions and pave the way for a peaceful, post-Suharto transition — reforms like permitting the formation of new political parties, allowing campaigning at a village level and removing the justice ministry's power to shut newspapers at will.

"Everyone knows it would be difficult," says Sidney Jones, Asia director for Human Rights Watch. "But you've got to find a way to do it, or you're going to be in much greater trouble later on."

It's not just that slighting democracy is immoral, a betrayal of courageous people in countries fighting for freedom. It's also dumb. In the long run, the nations of Central Asia and the Caucasus won't be stable if a few despots are permitted to siphon off the oil money, leaving most people desperately poor.

America should "seek not only economic restructuring from Asia's teetering autocratic regimes, but substantial political reform as well." This was the statement of Martin Lee cited by Senator Helms. It's a view that American officials ought to be proud to endorse.



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Canada Gets Its Week in Court

Howard Schneider in Ottawa

FOR 400 years, the people of this northern land have argued over the place French culture has in Canada. Over the past 30, they have fought over whether the mostly French-speaking province of Quebec should settle the matter for good by becoming an independent state.

Last week, Canada's Supreme Court opened a hearing that began by delving into the philosophical and legal roots of nationhood and could end with the court specifying some ground rules for the country's disintegration.

Though the question of whether the court's eventual decision will have any effect on the aspirations of Quebec or any other province remains wide open, the hearing has sparked strong feelings throughout Canada. The court proceedings — as part of the dance that goes on between Quebec sovereigntists and the rest of the country — are characterized as either a high-minded exercise in constitutional democracy or a base ploy by Ottawa to convince Quebecers that they would be breaking the law if they tried to secede.

It is also proof that this country has made little if any progress toward reconciliation since an October 1995 referendum in which Quebec separatists came within a few thousand votes of a victory that would have set the stage for their own declaration of independence.

If anything, relations are at a low. Even some pro-Canada forces in Quebec are angry about the federal government's use of the Supreme Court for what they feel are blatantly political ends; meanwhile the province's separatist premier, Lucien Bouchard, is riding high in public opinion for his management of the devastation wrought by a recent ice storm, and sovereigntists have been bashing Ottawa for everything from refusing to pay for storm cleanup to not providing enough French-language presentations during Canada's activities on the opening day of the Winter Olympics in Japan.

There is even speculation that Bouchard, a master of political gambits, might stage a provincial election and follow-up referendum on sovereignty this spring, though continuing budget problems and upcoming labor negotiations make that less likely.

"There is a lot of tension in the air," said Yves Fortier, the lead lawyer for the federal government in the Supreme Court hearings. To begin with, the issue is, in some fundamental sense, beyond the court's reach: Imagine the US Supreme Court in the 1860s telling the nascent Confederacy that it was unconstitutional to fire on Fort Sumter.

The current hearings are part of the Canadian court's practice of occasionally accepting what are, in essence, hypothetical "references" that ask for non-binding guidance on the country's constitution.

In this case, the federal government 18 months ago asked the nine-member panel to answer questions about any move by Quebec to separate — whether, either under Canada's constitution or international law, Quebec could leave Canada without the agreement of either the federal government or the provinces or a constitutional amendment.

The federal government argues that the answer is no and that any separation would require a constitutional amendment approved by the rest of Canada.

Quebec, in another demonstration of the divide on this issue, has refused even to participate in the hearings on the grounds that the province's sovereignty is a political issue for Quebecers to decide on their own. The terms of separation could perhaps be negotiated with the rest of Canada — that's what sovereigntist leaders have said is their intent — but it certainly would not be governed by the strictures of a constitution that the province has never even ratified.

Bouchard emphasized that in a speech before a cheering University of Montreal crowd last month. "Ottawa is asking judges it appoints unilaterally to rule on a constitution it imposed unilaterally so it can unilaterally oppose democracy," he said. "The right to choose — their government or their future — belongs to the Quebecois. It does not belong to the government."

That sentiment is shared by many federalists in Quebec as well, and their willingness to say so publicly has raised concerns that what looked like a strong ploy by Prime Minister Jean Chretien to stand up for Canada may backfire.

The existence of the case is part of the harder line toward the sovereignty movement that Ottawa has slowly adopted since the 1995 referendum. After largely ignoring the separatist threat in advance of that vote — and nearly losing it — Chretien now has government lawyers developing arguments about the conditions under which a country's authority over its territory take precedence over demands by individual groups for "self-determination."

A decision is not expected until summer or fall — and even then, it is unclear what practical effect the court's advice will have. As Fortier and other government lawyers acknowledge, along with politicians like Dion, if Quebecers make a clear political decision to leave Canada, they will be allowed to do so.

Having won a referendum, for example, no separatist leader in Quebec is likely to defer to the Canadian Supreme Court; conversely, it is improbable that, having lost a referendum, a Canadian prime minister would call on the military, for example, to enforce the constitution.

Wrestlers Break the Ice in Iran

Kenneth J. Cooper in Tehran

AS AN athletic competition, wrestling in Iran did not go the same way for the United States as did playing ping-pong in China.

When an American team played table tennis in Beijing in 1971, clearing the way for the eventual normalization of diplomatic relations, their Chinese opponents backhanded the visitors all over the table. Some members of the American team got the impression that the Chinese, the world's best in the game, let them win a few matches just to be gracious hosts.

But in an international wrestling tournament that ended here last week, the first American athletes to compete in Iran since the Islamic revolution of 1979 wiped the mat with their hosts.

The five Americans won nine of 12 head-to-head tussles with Iranians on the 50-member team that their country sent into the freestyle competition. Until the last night, an American wrestler had lost only once to an Iranian in two days.

The hosts could have felt they got even in the final round by winning two close matches, including the tournament's featured and final clash between heavyweight rivals who met in a disputed contest in Toronto five years ago.

"It's better if the other side wins," said John Marks, director of Search for Common Ground, a Washington-based group that has promoted American participation in the tournament as an opening to improved US-Iranian relations.

The American wrestlers and 12,000 flag-waving, chanting Iranians played the role of the ambassadors that their countries have not exchanged since Islamic militants attacked the US embassy here in 1979, taking 52 hostages whom they held for 444 days.



Fighting to win friends: Shawn Charles, left, in action with Iran's Mahdi Kaveh PHOTO KAMRAN JEBREILI

Zeke Jones, a peppy 120-pounder from Chandler, Arizona, was cheered when he entered the packed arena to receive a second-place medal. Then Jones, whose first name Iranians pronounced "Zakie", brought the all-male crowd to its feet with a roar when he raised a small Iranian flag over his head from a corner of Freedom Sports Arena. Jones, 31, said he made the gesture "to show friendship between American wrestlers and the people of Iran. . . . We've been treated like royalty."

After winning his championship match, Kevin Jackson, a 1992 Olympic silver medal-winner from Gilbert, Arizona, hugged the Iranian he had just defeated.

At other moments, tensions were apparent. Shawn Charles, a 140-pounder from Mount Pleasant, Michigan, lost a third-place match based on penalties that baffled him when they were called. "I don't believe it," an equally baffled Iranian muttered in English when Charles's opponent was declared the winner.

The award ceremony was altered to avoid inflaming anti-American sentiment among conservative Iranians outside the arena. The national flag of champions was not raised, nor was their national anthem played.

The tournament was capped by a rematch of 215-pounders Melvin Douglas of Mesa, Arizona, and Abbas Jadidi, who won the silver medal at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. At the 1993 world championships in Toronto, Jadidi defeated Douglas but was later disqualified for failing a drug test.

Jadidi, Iran's best wrestler, won again. After Jadidi twisted Douglas around by the legs to triumph in overtime, the wrestlers embraced and walked off the mat with their arms around each other.

North Korea Sends Seoul Billets-Doux

Mary Jordan in Tokyo

NORTH KOREA made a remarkable gesture of peace to South Korea last week, sending letters across the fortified border that offer dialogue between political parties and civic groups in each country.

The offer appears to be a response to conciliatory gestures from Seoul, diplomats and analysts said.

In letters sent through Red Cross officials at the truce village of Panmunjom along the most militarized border in the world, North Korea said it sought to thaw frozen diplomatic ties between the two nations who have been bitter adversaries for half a century.

The 70 or so letters — addressed to president-elect Kim Dae-jung and other political and civic leaders — seek "dialogue between the political parties and civic groups" in each country, although it was unclear exactly what sort of talks North Korea envisioned.

North Korean Workers' Party Secretary Kim Yong-sun was quoted by the official Korean Central News Agency as saying, "We are willing to have a dialogue and negotiation with anyone in South Korea, including political parties and organizations."

U.S. officials in Seoul said Kim Yong-sun is a top-ranking official in charge of North-South relations, so his statements are seen as the official position of the North Korean government and its reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il. Officials said such conciliatory remarks from North Korea are rare, and following up with hand-delivered letters is nearly unheard of.

North Korea's gestures came days before South Korea swore in Kim Dae-jung as president on February 25. Dae-jung has made a series of proposals that suggest he will be far more willing to engage the North Koreans than the hawkish former president Kim Young-sam.

Since his election in December, Kim Dae-jung has called for direct talks with North Korea, an exchange of envoys and the revocation of laws forbidding South Koreans from receiving North Korean radio and television broadcasts. Kim Dae-jung said he would even consider a face-to-face meeting with Kim Jong-il.



Dialogue between the two nations was unthinkable even a year ago, when a North Korean submarine full of spies ran aground in the South, raising tensions so high that Kim Young-sam raised the possibility of "all-out war".

Since then, South Korean attention has turned largely inward, with a catastrophic economic collapse causing turmoil that has put discussion of North-South relations on the back-burner. Many observers thought North Korea would try to capitalize more on the South's economic problems; instead, it has stayed noticeably quiet and shown increasing willingness to deal with Kim Dae-jung.

North Korea itself is in the midst of massive food shortages. The United Nations recently appealed for $415 million in donations for food and medical supplies. Although many aid workers have been allowed into North Korea, parts of the country remain off-limits.

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When You Can't Confide Even in Friends

David Maraniss on the loneliness of the president



BILL CLINTON, as he struggles to survive the most serious crisis of his career, has become a study in presidential loneliness.

His life was built on two things — words and friends — that suddenly seem of less use to him. In public, he has offered up few words to explain the mess he is in, and in private, almost none of his legion of friends is willing or able to hear him say much more. The president who once chafed at the confinements of his job by calling the White House "the crown jewel in the American penal system" is now confronted by the prisoner's paradox: an existence in which he is rarely by himself and yet always alone.

Clinton's aversion to being alone has been a defining trait of his life. As a teenager in Arkansas, he invited friends to his house just to watch him finish a crossword puzzle. During these last few perilous weeks, he has engaged in his customary pursuit of crowds and reassurance. He brings friends in for popcorn and a movie. He dances past midnight with celebrities at a state dinner. He lingers wistfully at a midday farewell party for a longtime White House aide. He rallies with Democratic troops on Capitol Hill. He heads to the heartland to touch hands along the rope line. He sifts through stacks of supportive letters and dissects internal polls indicating the public is with him.

But something is different in these last weeks since the allegations of presidential sex and perjury broke, according to interviews with friends, aides and associates from all parts of Clinton's life. All presidents operate in a bubble of agents and aides, but the distance that inevitably separates even this most gregarious of presidents from the rest of humanity has become greater, his sense of isolation more noticeable.

The surest evidence of how much things have changed is the fact that Clinton's most intimate conversations seem to be with his legal counselors. These men, including Mickey Kantor, Robert S. Bennett, David E. Kendall and Charles F.C. Ruff, have little in common except their client but, to varying degrees, they have become not only the president's lawyers but also his brothers, confidants, psychiatrists. If he has not told them everything, they apparently have heard more than anyone, including Hillary Rodham Clinton, in some matters. To one or more of them, he has offered details of the most indelicate troubles of his life involving Paula Jones, Whitewater and Monica S. Lewinsky. When he is frustrated, confused, feeling like a wounded animal, he is most likely to turn to them to talk about it. The conversations might never come around to his present predicament, but will calm him down.

That his lawyers have emerged as his closest confidants now is largely a matter of pragmatism. As one person close to the situation said bluntly: "Who the hell else is he going to talk to? He is not going to talk to Hillary about some of this stuff."

Vice President Gore has declared himself the president's loyal friend and made it clear that he does not really want to know the details. Vernon E. Jordan Jr. might have served the role of brother-confessor in the past, but now, caught up in the Lewinsky investigation himself, he has had to keep a certain distance. It did not go unnoticed that Jordan, a regular at White House functions, was off the list at the February 5 state dinner for British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Blair proved a fine friend for a few days during the crisis, but he has his own country to run.

Clinton has always felt comfortable with Bruce Lindsey, his ghostly silent deputy counsel, a longtime friend from Arkansas, but Lindsey is more the fixer and loyal servant than confidant. He is there to play hearts with the president and do whatever needs to be done to ease Clinton's way. Thomas F. "Mack" McLarty, another Arkansas pal in the White House, said recently that he seeks to be "supportive" of his friend "in good times and bad," but that Clinton has not sought his ear. Among the other Arkansas friends who came to Washington with him, deputy counsel Vincent W. Foster Jr. is long dead from suicide and the hulking Webster L. Hubbell, former associate attorney general, who served hard time for double-billing his old law firm, has been quietly discarded in his post-prison days.

'I think the longer anyone is president, the less possible it becomes for even the closest of friends to be totally relaxed and natural.'

James Carville and Paul Begala, Clinton's pit bull consultants, are more concerned with learning about Clinton's adversaries than in dealing with the truth and consequences of their own man. He has never bared his soul to them. The discredited political mastermind, Dick Morris, banished for his own sexual transgressions, is one telephone call away from working his way back into Clinton's vortex, but has been in temporary exile again since he offered up the hypothetical explanation of the president's behavior: Perhaps, he theorized to a Los Angeles radio station, Hillary Clinton disliked normal marital relations, compelling her husband to turn elsewhere. So much for friend Morris.

George Stephanopoulos, the former aide who once spent more time at Clinton's side than anyone, and often shuddered in private with worst-case scenarios of his boss, now shares them on television with the whole nation. He has said that he never felt like a Clinton confidant or peer in any case. Other aides of his generation who stayed in the White House after Stephanopoulos left now plot tactics and strategies for the president without having a clue, they acknowledge, about what he did or how he really feels.

Erskine B. Bowles, the chief of staff, has shown a disinclination for personal controversy and has tried to keep the White House going as though Monica Lewinsky and Kenneth W. Starr did not exist. Michael McCurry, the press secretary, has announced to the clamoring press pack that on these issues he is determinedly and safely out of the loop. Friends of Bill from Hot Springs, Fayetteville and Little Rock have tried to support him as best they can, but they have felt a certain distance.

In almost every case, the explanation they offer is the same one that applies to McCurry, McLarty and others close to the president professionally or personally — they are worried about getting caught in the tangled web of Clinton investigations. Every conversation with their friend comes with the unspoken subtext of potential legal bills, especially since Starr, the independent counsel, has shown such aggression in hauling people before his federal grand jury.

"This last month has been harder than ever for all of us," said one longtime friend from Arkansas. "When you see that everybody who is a friend or close to him has been subpoenaed, investigated, written about, it is just going to put another kind of artificial protective sort of distance there. If you talk to him at all, the unspoken mutual concern is: Don't say anything that will get you in trouble. Don't say anything that will get me in trouble."

The burden this situation places on Clinton's friends only exacerbates the sense of separation they feel from the president anyway simply because of the distance between his office and the rest of the world. One Arkansas friend said she felt a bit more removed from Clinton year by year. "He is absolutely a more lonely figure," she said. "I think the longer anyone is president, the less possible it becomes for even the closest of friends to be totally themselves, totally relaxed and natural." Other friends noticed that Clinton seemed ever more circumspect, having come to realize that almost anything he says will become public — the notion that everyone leaks, even good friends.

None of the people around him, nor any of his lifelong friends, can know the pressures that a president faces, and none of them can know his deepest fears and insecurities, not even the lawyers he confides in these days. In that sense, he has no peers, only predecessors. Thomas Jefferson said the presidency brings "nothing but drudgery and a daily loss of friends." Woodrow Wilson said he "never dreamed such loneliness and desolation of heart possible." William Howard Taft called the White House "the loneliest place in the world."

But Clinton had spent his life preparing to be president. That his friends are of less help to him now is not entirely a surprise. Before he came to Washington, he left one family friend behind, and in that moment there was an odd foreshadowing of all the troubles that would follow him. On his final day in Little Rock before heading east for his inauguration in 1993, Clinton jogged from the governor's mansion, carrying a shoe box under his arm. Inside was a small frog.

When he reached the Arkansas River, Clinton scrambled down and released the frog. The creature, he explained, would forgo the move east and remain in Arkansas, where it can live a normal life."

U.S. Clerics Given Warm Welcome

Steven Mufson in Beijing

ON THE eve of meeting Chinese President Jiang Zemin, the Rev. Don Argue asked his wife in the United States to pray for a successful meeting. She faxed him a quote from the Bible to bolster his spirits.

In fact, no prayers were needed. Argue, New York-based Rabbi Arthur Schneier and Roman Catholic Archbishop Theodore McCarrick of Newark are here on a three-week trip that is more a diplomatic mission than a religious one. Dispatched by President Clinton as a result of the Jiang-Clinton summit last year to investigate restrictions on religious freedoms in China, the three clerics met for more than an hour with the Chinese leader, who treated them as visiting dignitaries.

Jiang told the clerics their arrival had come at an auspicious time because it coincided with the Lantern Festival, celebrated on the first full moon after the Chinese new year. Schneier, who gave Jiang a Chinese-language encyclopedia of Judaism published in Shanghai, replied that the psalmist David wrote, "The Lord has created this day, let us rejoice."

It remains in dispute whether the situation of Chinese believers today is a matter for rejoicing.

Compared with the tumultuous Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, when priests were put in labor camps or solitary confinement and Buddhist and Taoist temples were defaced by marauding Red Guards, religious conditions today seem great. Millions of Bibles are printed, hundreds of sites of religious worship have been restored, and religious observance has received the blessing of the Communist Party.

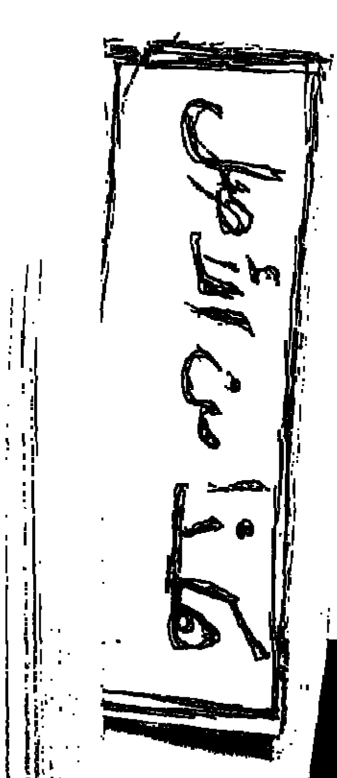
But there is a catch. Religious activity must take place under the umbrella of "patriotic" religious organizations registered with the Religious Affairs Bureau of the State Council and the Communist Party's United Front Work Department. No religious figure can claim authority higher than that of the Communist Party.

For those who transgress those guidelines, punishment awaits. One Vatican loyalist, Bishop Zeng Jingmu, 77, from Fuzhou in Jiangxi province, is in his third year in a reeducation camp, human rights groups report. He is one of at least 29 jailed Catholic leaders. Dozens of Protestants are also in detention. And somewhere in northern Beijing, an 8-year-old boy is detained because Tibetan Buddhists believe that he is the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, their leader.

With rising concern in Congress about religious restrictions here, the clerics are seen as providing political cover for the Clinton administration while it continues to forge warmer relations with Beijing. But the visit also serves a political purpose for China. The meeting with Jiang was splashed on the front pages of newspapers and displayed on the evening state-run news program.

The clerics refused to say whether it will meet any underground church members, but that would be difficult given the presence of Chinese security police.

"We're going to get heat when we get back to the States," Argue acknowledged. "People will say we sold out to the [Chinese] system. But we haven't to one degree."



A Little War With Big Consequences

H.W. Brands

EMPIRE BY DEFAULT
Spanish-American War and the Dawn of the American Century
By Ivan Musicant
Henry Holt. 740 pp. $35

WAR IS HELL. William Tecumseh Sherman knew it and succinctly said so. Valeriano Weyler, a Spanish military attache during the Civil War who admired Sherman, knew it and, sent to Cuba 30 years later to suppress a revolt there, wondered at complaints of his harsh tactics. "How do they want me to wage war?" he asked. "With bishops' pastorals and presents of sweets and money?" William McKinley knew it. The last American president to have served in the Civil War, McKinley remembered that conflict clearly. "I have been through one war," he declared. "I have seen the dead piled up, and I do not want to see another."

Theodore Roosevelt didn't know it. A child during the Civil War, he had experienced battle only vicariously, through the tales of friends and relatives and through adventure stories that enabled a sickly boy to transcend his infirmities via literature. William Randolph Hearst didn't know it — although given his willingness to subordinate principle to circulation, such knowledge probably wouldn't have altered his incendiary editorializing during the crucial months that led to the Spanish-American War. Most Americans of Roosevelt's and Hearst's generation didn't know it, the population of the country having doubled since Appomattox. Their ignorance goes far to explain their eagerness for war in 1898, in keeping with the observable fact that wars in American history occur roughly once per generation.

Ivan Musicant knows that war is hell, but he also knows that it makes a hell of a story. And in Empire By Default he does a wonderful job telling it. He writes with a vigor worthy of Roosevelt. His portraits of the principals in the Spanish-American War are forthright and frequently provocative; his depictions of the events are vivid, occasionally moving. This is a long book about a short war, yet only at the end, when the author piles on a bit too much detail about the diplomacy of the peace negotiations, does the dramatic tension dissipate.

ILLUSTRATION: CHRISTOPHER BING

Historians of war fall into two classes: those who like ships and those who prefer their fighting on the ground. Musicant, the author of three previous naval histories (and one history of American intervention in Central America), clearly leans to the watery mode. His account of the destruction of the Maine on February 15, 1898 is graphic without being ghoulish; his retelling of Commodore George Dewey's victory at Manila Bay on May 1 places the reader at Capt. Charles Vernon Gridley's left hand (the right being reserved to acknowledge the famous fire-when-ready order from Dewey); his treatment of the hunt for Spanish vice-admiral Pascual Cervera enlivens an episode often passed over.

Musicant's microhistory is more compelling than his macrohistory. He attempts to set the domestic context for American belligerence but trips over the odd fact and the curious characterization (if Mark Hanna was a "mega-industrialist," what were John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie?). The book's title is also a bit puzzling after all the time Musicant spends on the likes of Roosevelt and fellow expansionists A.T. Mahan and Henry Cabot Lodge. William McKinley may have backed into empire, but he was pushed — hard.

And even with McKinley the evidence is ambiguous. Musicant accepts the contemporary war-hawk criticism of McKinley as immobilized and unable to lead; echoing (and repeating) Roosevelt's comparison of his boss's backbone to a chocolate eclair, Musicant says that McKinley, "paralyzed with indecision," became "a prisoner of his natural political passivity." But Roosevelt discovered that McKinley had a knack for winding up with what he wanted without having to ask for it (including the popular but reluctant Roosevelt on the 1900 ticket), and Musicant, after bemoaning McKinley's passivity, describes the chief executive's "enormous victory" in "asserting presidential primacy in foreign affairs at a time when a raging Congress and inflamed public opinion dictated the opposite."

Had Musicant continued his story beyond the Paris pact that ended the war with Spain, perhaps he would have reconsidered whether empire came to America quite by default. The war against Spain might have been splendid and little, as John Hay said, but the Philippine war, the direct offspring of the fight against Spain, was brutal, deadly, agonizingly long and demoralizing. Americans in the Philippines employed tactics chillingly similar to those that earned Weyler the nickname "Butcher" in Cuba; the provisioning scandal of the "embalmed beef" for the troops in Cuba faded in the face of shock at revelations of the "water cure" and similar atrocities across the Pacific. The Philippine war revealed that Americans would fight for their empire; at the same time, by reminding them what hell war was, it guaranteed that they wouldn't glibly grab any more colonies. One such war was enough for this generation.

Drawing From the Well

Jeannine DeLombard

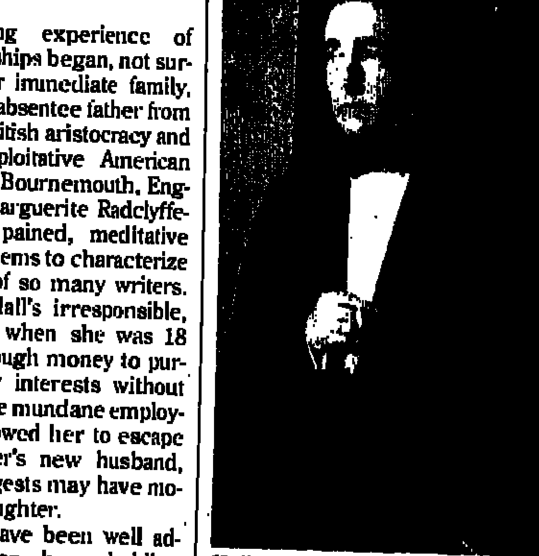
RADCLYFFE HALL
A Woman Called John
By Sally Cline
Overlook Press. 434 pp. $32.50

DESPITE the title of her best-known book, The Well Of Loneliness, Radclyffe Hall's most vexing problem was not solitude but society. At least this is the impression one gets from reading Sally Cline's carefully researched biography of Hall, arguably the early 20th century's most famous lesbian.

Like a sculptor creating a likeness out of a block of marble, Cline chips away at Hall's turbulent friendships, family relationships and romances to expose the contours of the complicated personality at their center. That this study remains a portrait of Hall's stony exterior, ultimately offering little insight into her thoughts and emotions, is perhaps due to the fact that, with the exception of a voluminous correspondence at the end of her life, Hall left very little in the way of autobiographical writings, forcing Cline to draw primarily on the diaries and memoirs of Hall's three most important lovers and, more problematically, Hall's fiction.

Hall's lifelong experience of stormy relationships began, not surprisingly, in her immediate family, composed of an absentee father from the fringes of British aristocracy and an abusive, exploitative American mother. Born in Bournemouth, England, in 1880, Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall lived the pained, meditative existence that seems to characterize the early lives of so many writers. The death of Hall's irresponsible, dissolute father when she was 18 left her with enough money to pursue her literary interests without the need for more mundane employment; it also allowed her to escape from her mother's new husband, whom Cline suggests may have molested his stepdaughter.

Cline would have been well advised to abandon her plodding chronological approach and open her study with one of the more sensational moments in Hall's tempestuous life — the obscenity trials over The Well Of Loneliness, for example, or one of her tragic love triangles — working in the dull details of Hall's ancestry and childhood where necessary. As it is, Cline's dutiful excavation of this information leads her to rely overmuch on Hall's fiction for psychological insight, which in turn leads to oversimplification. (For example, after describing an incident in which Hall's stepfather cruelly takes the child's pet bird away from her, Cline notes with the utmost seriousness that Hall's "fiction becomes a home for defenseless canaries, and powerless children attached to canaries.")



Hall adopted her masculine look only in her forties PHOTO: FOX

The adult Hall — or John, as she was known socially — is more interesting, if not more accessible, than the young Marguerite. Those familiar with Radclyffe Hall through photographs of her in austere middle age, sporting tailored tweeds, slicked-back hair and a tie, may be surprised to find that, although she early enjoyed both female lovers and what was then perceived as masculine dress, Hall was a political conservative and a devout Catholic who wore only skirts in public through the 1920s and did not cut her knee-length blond hair until she was almost 40 years old.

Hall's identity as a poet and a lesbian emerged during her long relationship with Mabel "Ladye" Batten, a celebrated mezzo-soprano, composer, grandmother and the former lover of King Edward VII. The relationship ended tragically with Ladye's death, which occurred while Hall was romping around the English countryside with her new lover (and Ladye's young, married cousin), Una Troubridge.

Over the next 28 years, Troubridge became the classic literary wife, subordinating her own career and ambitions to that of her beloved; searching out conducive writing environments, shielding Hall from family and friends during periods of intense creativity, neglecting her own daughter, and finding titles for many of Hall's novels. Troubridge celebrated with Hall over the critical success of her 1926 novel Adam's Breed and supported her through the grueling obscenity trials that prohibited the publication in England of The Well Of Loneliness. Aware of her and Hall's status as the poster couple for female sexual "inversion" (as described by sexologist Havelock Ellis, who wrote a "Commentary" for The Well Of Loneliness and greatly influenced Hall's views on the biological origins of lesbian sexuality), Troubridge even tolerated Hall's torrid nine-year affair with her 28-year-old White Russian nurse, Evguenia Souline, which continued until Hall's death of cancer in 1943.

Hall's passionate correspondence with Souline offers the most sustained glimpse of the inner workings of the lesbian icon's mind. It is not, however, an attractive one: In her twice-daily letters to the young Russian refugee, Hall ceaselessly tries to bully and baby-talk her lover into passivity and dependence. (In one letter, a stern Hall punishes Souline for her decision to enroll in a typing and shorthand course at Oxford by cutting by £5 her monthly "allowance".) The image that emerges from these letters, as from the biography itself, is of an insecure, domineering woman determined to master the complicated female relationships which, at least as much as her writing, defined and structured her life.

Paris starts to parley with Abacha regime

Michèle Maringues

WILL Nigeria's educated classes eventually speak French as fluently as they do English? The announcement a year ago by the country's leader, General Sani Abacha, that he intended to make French its second language was logical enough: Nigeria, Africa's most populated nation, is surrounded by French-speaking countries over which it already exerts an economic, political and, indirectly, military influence.

The amount of money earmarked for education has just been increased sharply, making it the budget's biggest single item this year, ahead of defence. In January the government announced that it was setting up three colleges specialising in the teaching of French near the federal capital, Abuja.

This overt friendliness towards Paris, one of the Nigerian leaders' favourite stopover cities (where the national oil company, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company, recently transferred its European headquarters from London), contrasts with the regime's frosty attitude towards Britain, the country's former colonial ruler.

This has been particularly true since Tony Blair became British prime minister last year. His Labour government has adopted an uncompromising line towards Abuja over human rights.

The Nigerian leadership has, on the other hand, behaved in a more conciliatory manner towards the United States since the appointment as ambassador in Lagos of William H Twaddell, a career diplomat formerly posted in Liberia. It had snubbed his predecessor, an Afro-American academic who was perceived as being too sympathetic to opposition circles.

Over the past two or three years, the French have come to the conclusion that they have a card to play in Nigeria. They are banking on the country making a gradual recovery. But, along with the rest of the international community, they espouse the "realistic" hypothesis that Abacha will perpetuate the present regime in one form or another.

The French argument is that it is a better idea to try to re-establish a dialogue rather than remonstrate with a regime that is in no mood to heed advice.

It is an argument that is all the more attractive because France has recently had to give ground in Central Africa and shift its focus of influence to West Africa, especially around the oilfields of the Gulf of Guinea.

The rapprochement with Abuja is also part of a long-term process: France, which under General Charles de Gaulle made the "mistake" of backing the secession in Biafra (when Britain sided with the federal authorities), has since striven to normalise, then improve, its relations with a regional power that "cannot be ignored".

Although the number of French companies operating in Nigeria has decreased since the beginning of the eighties, when oil revenues generated a steady flow of contracts, France now has more clout.

This has been largely due to the growing influence of the French companies Elf and Total in the oil and natural gas sector. Elf did particularly well under the regime of President Ibrahim Babangida from 1985 on, whereas Total has been riding high since Abacha took power at the end of 1993.

Significantly, it was Gaz de France (GDF) that salvaged the Bonny liquefied gas project (in which Elf has a stake) when it was seriously jeopardised by opposition from the Italian Greens. Deliveries of Nigerian gas will now go not to Italy but to GDF's terminal at Montoir-de-Bretagne.

But even the strongest French advocates of a constructive dialogue with the Nigerian regime admit they have been disappointed by its performance. "The worrying thing," a French diplomat who encouraged France's present policy says off the record, "is that General Abacha does not make clear-cut decisions on crucial issues: he has not succeeded in really modernising the economy or encouraging a national reconciliation, nor has he brought his country back into the international fold".

Despite promises by the finance minister, Anthony Ani, the 1998 budget, based rather over-optimistically on an oil price of $17 a barrel, falls far short of the expectations of the business community and Nigeria's principal creditors. As one economist puts it: "It's a budget with electoral overtones, in which the reforms are limited to a minimum so as not to annoy the nationalists."

True, the government has pledged to privatise the state-owned oil refineries, and electricity and telephone utilities. But Abacha has failed to meet the International Monetary Fund's demand that he bring Nigeria's two exchange rates into line — the existence over the past four years of a "preferential" rate of 22 nairas to the US dollar (as against 83 on the black market) has greatly enriched the regime's hangers-on. A list of 800 "priority" projects suggests that public funds may be about to be squandered.

The regime is continuing to rush through the transfer of its central administration to Abuja, 750km inland. All the ministries, the NNPC, the law faculty (once the pride of Lagos) and even the national ports authority are now based there. This will eventually force foreign embassies to follow suit. A direct air link between Europe and Abuja, bypassing Lagos, is shortly to be established.

This inevitable redeployment will enable Nigeria, a huge country, to develop in a more balanced way. But it is also bound to increase resentment in the Yoruba southwest, which has been Nigeria's economic, political and cultural powerhouse since independence.

The stability of the Abuja regime — and thereby the confidence of investors — depends more than ever on its ability to reconcile once and for all the various forces that make up the turbulent Nigerian nation.

(February 15-16)

France seeks to kill speed on the road

Pierre Georges

IN 1972 almost 17,000 people died on French roads. In 1997 the figure was 8,000. It took a quarter of a century to halve that tragic statistic. Road safety, improved car safety features, better roads, the punishment of bad driving and a better education, if not training, of drivers have all played their part in improving the road death toll.

What happened between 1972 and 1997 was not a miracle, but the cumulative effect of a number of new laws. It was the outcome of a long campaign for less selfish driving, even if constraint also had to be used.

The figures reflect the legal arsenal introduced over 25 years: compulsory front-seat seat-belts in 1973, stricter speed limits in 1974 and again in 1983, a crackdown on drink-driving in 1984, a roadworthiness test for old vehicles in 1985, back-seat seat-belts in 1990, and a points system for driving offences in 1992.

The many arguments put forward by the road lobby — all of them to some degree loaded — on such issues as speed and the points system carry little weight compared with this list, which represents a straightforward difference between lives saved and lives lost.

Engine of change . . . The Gayssot bill marks a further advance in the effort to bring down the road toll

Roads kill. The number of deaths may have gone down, but there are still too many. That is why the Gayssot bill, announced on February 18, marks a further vital stage in this long struggle against what is a national scandal. Its aim is clearly defined: to reduce the annual number of road deaths from 8,000 to 4,000 within the next five years.

One measure will make excessive speeding a crime rather than an offence. Any driver caught driving at more than 50kmh above the speed limit will be liable to a six-month jail sentence and a maximum fine of 50,000 francs ($8,000). There is a proviso: only if a driver is caught speeding twice within a year will it count as a crime rather than an offence. People caught driving 50kmh above the limit for the first time will, as now, be fined and have points deducted from their licence.

If I insist on this single aspect of the Gayssot bill — its intention to make excessive speeding a crime — it is because in 1994 another transport minister, Bernard Bosson, sought to introduce similar legislation, the difference being that it was even stiffer, since it made no distinction between a first and a second offence.

The massed ranks of those who believed they had a right to drive in a manner that was lethal both to themselves and others started squealing that the bill amounted to an infringement of their liberties. Worse, the proposed legislation managed to arouse the unanimous hostility of MPs, whether of the right or left, who felt it went too far.

A slightly watered-down bill is about to come before parliament. It would be nothing short of scandalous if it were not adopted.

(February 20)

Separatists refuse to soften line

Marie-Claude Decamps in Madrid

ON FEBRUARY 14 the national assembly of the Basque separatist coalition, Herri Batasuna (HB), meeting in Pamplona, appointed a new collegiate leadership after two months of debate and three weeks of internal elections. Never before has a list of candidates been so meticulously chosen.

That same day Spain commemorated the death of a former president of the Constitutional Tribunal. Francisco Tomas y Valiente, whose murder two years ago by ETA, the armed wing of the Basque separatist movement, prompted huge demonstrations against terrorism. Many other protests have been held since then.

HB's new leaders, although more representative of the movement's various ideological strands than the previous team, do not have the "moderate" profile that had been hoped for in some quarters.

The fact that members of KAS (Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista), a group representing the most radical organisations within ETA, are this time in a minority (11 out of 24) could be regarded as a significant development. It must also be acknowledged that some of the most virulent hardliners have been ousted from the leadership. But internal criticism is still not allowed: candidates who openly questioned the use of violence have also been excluded.

The daily El Pais feels that all in all there has been "a moderate opening up, combined with a dose of realism, compared with the former leadership's reckless policies".

The conservative press is more sceptical. ABC believes this is just a case of "superficial moderation", imposed for tactical reasons by ETA to give HB "a more autonomous air".

However that may be, the movement's actual or supposed autonomy will shortly be put to the test: with elections for the Basque parliament coming up in eight months, most political parties, from the Basque Nationalist party (PNV) — the largest in the Basque Country — to the conservative People's party (PP) and the Socialists are having huge difficulty trying to decide whether or not to start up a dialogue with HB, and under what conditions.

The likelihood of any agreement on the Basque issue and even on the anti-terrorist campaign seems to have receded. Gone is the groundswell of anti-ETA sentiment that followed the murder of councillor Miguel Angel Blanco last July.

The ruling PP, four of whose councillors have been murdered, has been accused of trying, by its intransigence, "to make political capital out of the dead" and thus make a local breakthrough at the future Basque elections.

As for the PNV, which has proposed an "unlimited" dialogue between democrats in the hope of achieving "a peaceful solution to the problem of terrorism", it is suspected of having "yielded to the blackmail of radical separatists" so as to wean voters away from HB.

(February 17)



The French culture minister Catherine Trautmann talks to **Jean-Michel Frodon**, **Yves-Marie Labé** and **Nicole Vulser** about the possible effects on the arts of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment

Europe 'will defend cultural exceptions'



IN WHAT way do you think the MAI now being negotiated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is dangerous for the arts?

The principle of the MAI is offensive because it regards works of art purely as investments, not as creations. I also find it offensive that companies should be allowed to impose their will without the consent of governments. Countries should be allowed to implement their own policies on the arts and education.

The MAI would end each country's policy of arts subsidies and sabotage any European cultural policy. If the MAI were to cover the arts, everything would go — production subsidies, aid to distributors and exhibitors, the quota systems that protect people in the music and audio-visual industries, and bilateral agreements between countries.

French film professionals have criticised the government for keeping the state of negotiations secret and underestimating the MAI's impact. What do you think?

I'm surprised at such criticism. I've raised the issue more than once since becoming culture minister, both in public and at political and industry meetings both here and abroad. As with all international negotiations, there was little point in revealing their tenor while they were still under way. But there was no secrecy and no underestimation of what was involved.

Isn't the French position liable to be seen as extreme — some of our partners are apparently prepared to be more flexible?

It's not about adopting an extreme position, but about being politically consistent. Since we defended the principle of the "cultural exception" during the Gatt talks, we could hardly throw in the sponge at the next stage. As regards our European partners, this is a good opportunity for us to show that this is an issue that concerns every country, without of course wishing to impose our model on anyone. But it's in every country's interest to defend its culture. The French position has proved that one can fight and get results even when the odds seem against it.

Areas qualifying for exemption from the MAI's general principles need to be specified. How is this possible when new technologies are going to open up as yet unknown ways of producing and disseminating works of art?

That's why we've demanded a "general cultural exception" that will make it possible to include new types of creation and dissemination as they appear.

Will France make recognition of that "general exception" a precondition for agreeing to sign the MAI? And if so, is it the only condition?

It's one of four absolute conditions: on top of the general cultural exception, we're pressing for the dropping of retaliatory procedures in trade relations between sovereign states, such as the D'Amato and Burton-Helms laws. We're also keen for the possibility of a European preference to be maintained, and we do not want our social welfare system to be affected.

How does the MAI fit into the international negotiations on the arts involving France?

It plays a vital part, first because the talks, as I've said, are fraught with danger. We have stated our basic long-term principles, particularly as regards new areas in multimedia. And we're ready for future international talks, both at European level over issues raised by the Green Book on Telecommunications and Multimedia, and at global level, with the Gatt re-negotiations within the framework of the World Trade Organisation coming up in 2000.

But the MAI talks are also an opportunity for Europeans to move closer together. They mark a step towards making consultation between European Union culture ministers a permanent feature of the landscape. The Birmingham meeting on the cinema and the audio-visual arts on April 5-6 will mark an important stage in that process, which should result in the setting up of a European council of culture ministers.

Isn't it a pity that Europe always seems to be on the defensive vis-à-vis the United States?

As it happens, exactly the opposite is true. The Europeans, and particularly the French, have adopted an offensive position. We're in favour of the free movement of investment. We've made the necessary efforts, and the MAI shows that Europe has genuinely mobilised its forces as regards globalisation. But globalisation has to be accompanied by guarantees.

It's the Americans who are on the defensive, and they who, in areas other than culture, have asked for a large number of exceptions to the MAI's general procedures.

(February 15-16)

Flaubert's fight against the bourgeois within

Pierre Lepape

Correspondance IV
Gustave Flaubert
Edited by Jean Bruneau
Bibliothèque de la Pléiade
(Gallimard) 1,500pp 479 francs

"THE artist should no more appear in his work than God in nature. Man is nothing, the work is all!" This profession of faith by Flaubert comes in a letter to George Sand dating from the very end of 1875, which closes the fourth and penultimate volume of this indispensable edition of his correspondence. It provides the key to Flaubert's letters: they are in every sense the reverse side of his *oeuvre*, in other words the man.

Flaubert was so painfully conscious of the way his letters affirmed the first person, which his fiction strove to muzzle or eliminate, that on more than one occasion he took drastic steps to prevent this from happening.

In his Souvenirs Littéraires, Maxime du Camp tells how he and Flaubert mutually agreed to destroy the many letters they had exchanged "when the publication of Lettres de Mérimée à Une Inconnue revealed to us the breach of trust to which we were laying ourselves open by allowing these private confidences, where we had freely used 'proper' names . . . and opened up our hearts unreservedly, to survive." They kept only a handful of them. "The rest were burnt, and we felt a twinge of regret at having destroyed those pages, which we had filled with all that was best in us."

Sometimes it was Flaubert's correspondents themselves who did the censoring — for the best reasons in the world, so as not to harm the reputation of the Great Writer by publishing "improprieties". "My friend pushed lewdness too far," wrote Ernest Chevalier. "I shall be careful to let you have what is worthy of him."

The bourgeoisie of 1880 dreamt of an uncontentious, squeaky-clean Flaubert. Given the choice, Flaubert would probably have preferred there to be no Flaubert at all, just his works. His correspondence, one of the finest in French literature, and one that André Gide said replaced the Bible at his bedside for five years, is a reluctant survivor.

If Flaubert had not written letters, he would doubtless have choked to death with sheer rage, pain and loneliness. This is particularly evident from the letters in this volume, which date from January 1869 to December 1875.

Those were especially dark years. They saw the death of his reader and comrade, Louis Bouilhet, the flop of L'Education Sentimentale, the flaying by the critics of his third version of La Tentation de Saint Antoine ("my whole life's work"), the death of his mother, the collapse of his fortune, the invasion of France by the Prussians, and the Commune.

They were years of anger, disgust and exasperation. Of loneliness too: Flaubert was only 51 in 1871, but his circle of friends was shrinking like that of an old man. His only friend was Sand, who was 17 years older than him. He called her "chère Maître" and addressed her using the respectful "vous" form. She used the familiar "tu", made a fuss of him, called him her "old troubadour" and, on occasion, gave him a good telling off.

They were very fond of each other but had completely different ideas. She was a democrat and a liberal who wrote books and articles to earn enough money to bring up her brood at Nohant in relative affluence. She believed in progress and in the virtue of hope, in other words patience.

Flaubert was, in her words, an *indécolèreux* (someone who is in a permanent state of rage). He was exasperated by the Second Empire, irked by the Commune and indignant about the Third Republic: "The whole dream of democracy is to raise the proletarian to the same degree of stupidity as the bourgeois."

And Flaubert knew something about the stupidity of the bourgeois: he knew he needed only to look at himself in a mirror to observe its effects. That stupidity was in his blood, his genes and his way of life. It was waiting to catch him out in his use of language, in his pat turns of phrase. "I'm trying to establish whether I do not possess the 32 qualities of the imbecile," he wrote. In another letter: "One has to resign oneself to living half way between idiocy and raving lunacy."

Flaubert mistrusted everything, and nothing more than his own feelings. He was a good person at heart (as can be seen from his affectionate letters to his niece, Caroline), a good son and a loyal friend. But he always felt the urge to wrench himself away from such a compliant attitude, so fearful was he of detecting in it the symptoms of what he called "the Joke" — by which he meant lies, sentimental nonsense, received ideas, and ideology.

THIS volume of correspondence is a remarkable record of literary society in the 1870s, provincial life during the Prussian occupation, the crisis of the bourgeois élites and the trauma of the Commune. But what interests us most is Flaubert the writer. We would like to find an echo of his work in his letters, but all we get are hints. Flaubert never talks about what he is writing.

He would go through three creative stages. The pre-writing stage involved encyclopaedic reading, piles of notes, and weeks spent scouring Paris for a piece of information that would end up as half a line in L'Education Sentimentale.

Then came the writing stage. His correspondents were told not about the actual text, but about the hours of pleasure and torture he spent intoxicated with ink. It took him an eternity to drag each sentence screaming into the world.

Lastly, there was the post-writing stage — meticulous corrections (too many "i"s in the sentence), tedious haggling with his publisher, and the reception the book got. That was the agonising moment when the book had to brave the outside world. Fellow writers lapsed into an embarrassed silence, others showered him with hypocritical compliments, and friendly critics got hold of the wrong end of the stick.

That was also the moment, at once dreaded and exhilarating, when Flaubert saw confirmation of his darkest prophecies about France's intellectual decay. He predicted the slating that L'Education Sentimentale and La Tentation were going to get. He looked forward to it as though it were a tonic: "I am sustained by the mere idea of the stupidities [the book] will elicit from the bourgeois."

Flaubert repeatedly said he could not care less about the jibes aimed at him. Yet he was left terribly bruised by the ferocious times he lived in.

(February 13)

Le Monde

Directeur: Jean-Marie Colombani
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Talks on cross-border investment treaty collapse

Charlotte Denny

TWO days of high-stakes negotiations over an international treaty to liberalise national rules on foreign investment collapsed last week.

Negotiators failed to agree on making a commitment for the 29 member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development to push for a political agreement at a ministerial meeting in late April.

A source close to the talks on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, which were held at the OECD's Paris headquarters, described the MAI as "dead in the water for now".

The MAI was promoted by the rich countries' think-tank, the OECD, as a way of encouraging and protecting more than $350 billion a year in cross-border investment, notably by obliging governments to treat foreign investors on the same terms as domestic counterparts. It would have allowed multinationals to sue national governments which harmed their interests.

The latest meeting took place under mounting opposition from environmental, labour and other interest groups. But the real sticking point was the exemptions for particular industries, such as the French film sector *(see facing page)*, demanded by national governments. American enthusiasm has waned because of tensions over US trade sanctions legislation — judged to be at odds with the treaty.

Meanwhile the business groups which originally sponsored the treaty have lost interest as its provisions have been watered down.

Lobby groups which campaigned for the treaty to include environmental and labour protection measures were hopeful that last week's failure could spell the end of the MAI.

G8 ministers target full employment

Larry Elliott argues that the London summit on jobs got it only half-right

TEN years ago the idea of holding a jobs summit would have been inconceivable. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan would never have given the idea house room, arguing that it smacked of an old, discredited age of demand management, profligate governments and irresponsible trade unions.

Today full employment is back on the agenda, and those who call for it are no longer treated as social pariahs. The fact that finance and employment ministers from eight of the world's biggest economies spent last weekend discussing it is good news.

What's more, the Group of Eight (G8) is at least some of the way towards finding a solution to the problem. The rise in unemployment was not the result of some freak of nature — an El Niño effect — but the consequence of governments following deflationary macroeconomic policies and putting up with distortive tax and benefit regimes at a time when the most vulnerable workers were threatened by technological change.

So it is welcome that the G8 called for enhanced employment opportunities for the young, the long-term unemployed, lone parents and the disabled; that it urged reform of tax and benefit systems to foster work incentives; and that it sought to encourage lifelong learning and equal opportunity. The problem is that the G8's forward-looking approach to the supply-side is not matched by its approach to the demand-side, where the thinking seems stuck in a 1980s time-warp.

G8 ministers agree they want to see more growth in their economies, but their new remedy sounds very much like the old monetarist nostrums. The first three principles set out in this week's communiqué — sound macroeconomic policies, structural reforms to labour, capital and product markets, and fostering entrepreneurship — could have been written any time in the past two decades.

This is essentially the doctrine laid down by Nigel Lawson in the 1984 Mais lecture, hardened into an article of faith. Macroeconomic policy is designed to keep inflation low and stable, while microeconomic policy creates the right conditions for faster growth and employment.

Mention an expansion of demand to any Western finance minister or central bank governor and he recoils in horror. The priority, they insist, is to avoid boom-bust. But, for most countries the problem is bust-bust.

If, as the new orthodoxy argues, the pursuit of macroeconomic policies that deliver "sustainable non-inflationary growth" are the answer, then by now we should be seeing some of the benefits. It is 14 years since the Mais lecture, so where's the beef?

According to the accepted wisdom, there is a country where Mr Lawson's prescriptions have worked. It is called the United States. All you need is an Alan Greenspan at your central bank masterminding monetary policy to deliver non-inflationary growth, a Robert Rubin at your Treasury bringing some order to your public finances, and a Bill Clinton as your visionary leader reforming welfare states and embracing global liberalisation.

A decade after it was seen as a sleeping leviathan, the US is now a dazzling success. Unemployment is plunging, growth is surging, living standards are booming, a new economy is emerging from the chrysalis of the old.

There is little doubt that 1997 was a golden year for the American economy, with real wages rising and unemployment falling. But economists are normally wary of taking one year in isolation, preferring to look at performance over a whole business cycle. As Larry Mishel and John Schmidt of the Economic Policy Institute, a Washington-based think-tank, have shown, once you do that some of the gloss comes off the notion that a "new paradigm" has been created across the Atlantic. America's reputation rests on one indicator — unemployment — but elsewhere its performance leaves a lot to be desired.

Let's start with growth rates in gross domestic product (GDP) per head, a key measure for economic performance. If the US really were leaving the rest of the world for dead, this is one area where it should be clearly evident. But, as it happens, growth in GDP per head in the US from 1989 to 1997 averaged 1.1 per cent a year, slower than in two of the economies currently considered basket cases — Germany and Japan — and on a par with the UK, France and Italy. What's more, America's GDP-per-head growth in the "new economy" of the 1990s has been markedly inferior to the growth enjoyed in the two previous business cycles — 1.8 per cent a year between 1979 and 1989, and 2.5 per cent a year from 1973 to 1979.

BUT even if the US is not doing that well in terms of GDP per head, surely it is outgunning the rest when it comes to productivity growth?

Between 1987 and 1995, real gross domestic product per hour worked rose by 0.9 per cent a year in the US. Far from being the best record in the G7, it was the worst, with the exception of Canada. Japan's growth rate was 2.9 per cent, Germany's 3.3 per cent and the UK's 1.8 per cent.

At this point, devotees of the US model normally say that the rest of the world enjoys faster productivity because they are following in the wake of America's lead, and enjoying the fruits of a catch-up process. Unfortunately this is not true either. The latest data show that Europe has narrowed or eliminated the productivity gap with the US.

As a result of their analysis, Mishel and Schmidt come to the following conclusion. "Whatever liabilities a developed welfare state, broad social protections and strong unions may represent for a country, no evidence exists to suggest that these institutional arrangements lead to slower economic or productivity growth."

Mishel and Schmidt — who also stress that most workers in the US are working longer and harder for less — are a useful antidote to those who argue that what Europe needs is a good, strong dose of American-style deregulation.

On the contrary, Europe's emphasis on training and education could mean that it has a well-qualified labour force capable of competing well in the new global economy. What it has lacked for a generation is sufficient growth.

It is still taboo to suggest that the G8 would be better off — in these deflationary times — setting targets for unemployment rather than for inflation. It is a sign of derangement to argue that governments should accept responsibility for directly creating jobs in the public sector. And it is utterly beyond the pale to suggest that one reason for slower growth since the mid-1970s has been the volatility caused by unfettered capital flows.

Still, times change. The politicians who are currently chanting the mantra "sound macroeconomic policies and sustainable non-inflationary growth" were once as certain that "love is all you need". And, as we have seen from the sabre-rattling of the past few weeks, they have certainly changed their minds about that.

In Brief

PLANS to create the world's largest drugs company through a merger of British companies Glaxo Wellcome and SmithKline Beecham were called off after the two firms failed to agree final terms amid signs of bitter recriminations. Among the key difficulties was almost certainly the prospective working relationship between the two bosses, Sir Richard Sykes of Glaxo and SKB's Jan Leschley.

HSBC underlined its position as the world's most profitable banking group by notching up a surplus of more than $8 billion last year.

THE UK government announced the re-appointment of Eddie George as governor of the Bank of England. His second term will stretch beyond the next election and possibly embrace the UK's membership of the single European currency.

AT LEAST 12 million British people — more than half of the workforce — are heading for financial hardship when they retire, according to a "pensions index" launched by NatWest bank. It found that only 21 per cent of workers will achieve a pension of $292 per week — the minimum that older people say is necessary for a comfortable retirement.

G7 FINANCE ministers called for "determined and speedy" extension of debt relief to a greater number of countries as the United States reversed its opposition to an acceleration of the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative.

SHAREHOLDERS in the Woolwich, the building society which converted to a bank last year, are to receive an unexpected windfall — an average dividend payout of $170.

UK RETAIL sales rose at their fastest rate for nearly 10 years in January, reinforcing fears that the Bank of England will raise interest rates to keep the lid on inflation.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates February 23	Sterling rates February 16
Australia	2.4559-2.4628	2.4669-2.4698
Austria	20.79-20.80	20.94-20.96
Belgium	60.98-61.07	61.45-61.54
Canada	2.3382-2.3400	2.3650-2.3669
Denmark	11.26-11.27	11.34-11.35
France	9.91-9.91	9.98-9.99
Germany	2.9549-2.9570	2.9775-2.9796
Hong Kong	12.72-12.73	12.87-12.88
Ireland	1.1876-1.1898	1.1935-1.1958
Italy	2,914-2,917	2,937-2,940
Japan	210.12-210.37	206.30-206.58
Netherlands	3.3305-3.3328	3.3561-3.3580
New Zealand	2.8486-2.8532	2.8394-2.8441
Norway	12.38-12.36	12.39-12.40
Portugal	302.41-302.70	304.82-305.11
Spain	250.39-250.54	252.35-252.54
Sweden	13.16-13.17	13.26-13.28
Switzerland	2.3840-2.3867	2.3948-2.3975
USA	1.6430-1.6437	1.6376-1.6382
ECU	1.4954-1.4970	1.5060-1.5076

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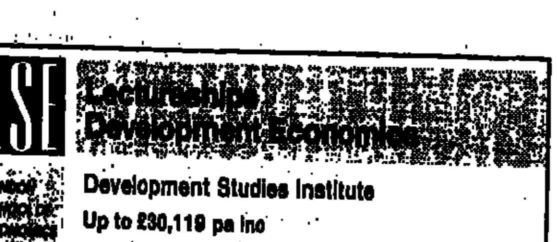
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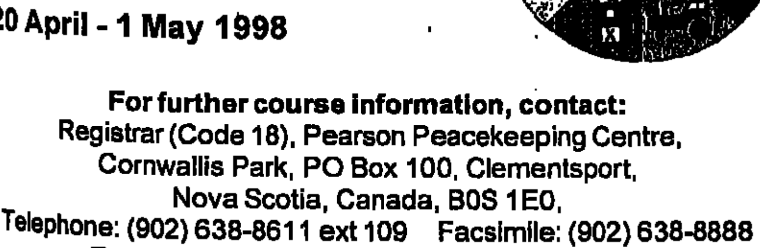


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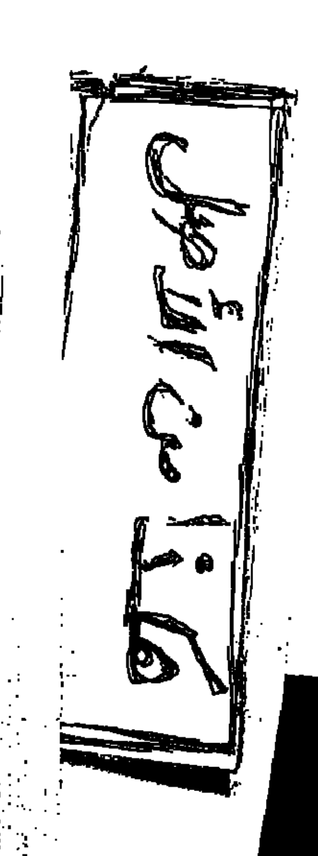
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Martha Gellhorn

THE streetcars of her hometown of St Louis, Missouri, shaped the life of Martha Gellhorn, who has died aged 89. Her suffragette mother and doctor father had raised her to confidence and campaigning, and, as a child, she had freedoms her peers did not; she roamed the city alone on those cars, looking in on lives unlike her own. "One bends one's one twig and it stays bent," she drawled long after.

She was briefly collegiate at Bryn Mawr, she was a cub reporter surviving on a diet of doughnuts. Then at 21, in 1930, her life began with a steerage-class passage to Europe, $75 and a suitcase. She went to Paris to become a foreign correspondent. Just like that.

Even for a girl who looked, as she once remarked, like the cartoon character Betty Boop — all batted eyelashes — and had limitless insouciance, it did not happen quite like that. Gellhorn sold any old writing she could and got a "very high-class education — standing room at ground level to watch history as it happened".

Her learning process involved European poverty and politics and an affair, later a short marriage, with the radical journalist Bertrand de Jouvenal. The process also covered returning to — and crossing — America, walking in on an oil boom and on the great Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein, who was failing to film in Mexico, and writing her first novel. It took her on to the payroll of the Federal Relief Agency, for which she filed reports on the lives of the forgotten poor, which read like epic captions for Depression photographers: she was sacked for inspiring local revolutions.

It allowed her the naivety to cadge room and board from H G Wells in London, where she wrote a vivid eye-witness account of a southern lynching she later admitted that she had never seen; and to accept the offer of President Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor — her mother's campaigning friend — to stay in the White House, which was pretty homey then. She put up there in Abraham Lincoln's bedroom and was fed regular meals during an awkward patch, when her furious moral righteousness made her otherwise unemployable.

There she finished The Trouble I've Seen, fiction based on her underclass investigations. It was published in 1936, with her portrait, blonde and elegant, on its dust jacket: this was a titillating combination and a success. She was immediately celebrated, but fled the hoopla by holidaying in Florida.

At a Key West bar called Sloppy Joe's, she ran into Ernest Hemingway, bulky in his "odiferous Basque shorts". Two big celebs in a small town. His books had been her models. She said so. He had seen her face on Trouble. All afternoon and evening, they drank Papa Dobles, two-and-a-half jiggers of white Bacardi rum, juice of two fresh limes, swirled in a rusty electric blender. It sounds like a Hollywood "meet-cute" — she walked into the bar in a black dress and high heels, with her terrific mother in tow. The Bacall and Bogart versions were merely remakes. She seems to have thought she had found the partner her nerve deserved. Hemingway was hooked.

He was also married and off to cover the Spanish Civil War. She decided to join the fight and him (perhaps not in that order), this time with a rucksack and $50, a letter of introduction from Collier's magazine, and a notion that the "correct response to a war against fascism was simply to be present on the right side". She thought that war correspondents reported the battlefield, and was surprised, but willing, when one suggested that a description of ordinary life in besieged Madrid was worth sending home. Collier's printed the piece, put her name on their masthead, and there she was, a war correspondent and Hemingway's lover.

One editor at Collier's appreciated and trusted her copy and, for eight years after that, she could go where she wanted and write what she saw. "I had the chance to see the life of my time, which was war." Her base was a house outside Havana, which she had made over for Hemingway and herself. They married and settled in. They worked on fiction. But Gellhorn wanted to be in on the war at last breaking out in Europe.

She reached London and followed the action in Europe and North Africa as closely as she could with, or usually without, official permission, and with directions from friends in useful places. She advanced recklessly up through Italy with the Allies. Hemingway's telegram to her there read: "Are you a war correspondent or my wife in bed?"

He eventually came after her. Their rivalry was not friendly any more. She seems to have been Hemingway's personal bullshit-detector, especially when she coldly watched him holding court in a London hospital after a drunken accident. Gellhorn stowed away on a D-Day hospital ship and went ashore at Normandy. Hemingway crossed the Channel as officially as possible, but did not land.

She then loosely attached herself to the 82nd Airborne Division through the bitter 1944-45 winter of the Battle of the Bulge, and also to its leader, the heroic General James Gavin. She was present when the chaotic mass of the Russian army swarmed up to the other Allies. She was in newly-liberated Dachau, at the apex of her anger, when peace was declared.

About all of these places and people she wrote simply. An American prose style of Shaker plainness. She believed real reporters did not take notes, but knew instinctively what remained forever important — trivia, the tone of the times.

It seldom included any utterance, or even mention, of a politician. "All politicians are bores and liars and fakes. I talk to people," she said. To read her dispatches (collected as The Face Of War and The View From The Ground) is to be granted instant access to where she was, whenever it was.

The business in peace was to settle down. Gellhorn was courted by Tom Matthews, a recently-retired editor of Time magazine, with a Mt Rushmore profile and a sound mind, and they married. But he wanted an urbane life in Britain, and she missed the excitement of the fight against fascism. "I am a loner. I am not a team player," she said once — she could certainly be unsociable, abrupt and grand — and "The ideal is to live five blocks away from a man who makes you laugh and is wrapped up in his work". The marriage petered out after nine years.

And so, by the 1960s, she was wandering again, her association with Collier's had lapsed with her editor's death in the 1940s: thereafter, she had often to give herself assignments, and pay her own expenses. Nevertheless, with help — which she remembered as rather minimal — from the Guardian, she reached Vietnam in 1966 to report the war (of which she was ashamed) that confirmed America as a colonial power.

Her long perspective eventually became valued again, when she returned to Madrid at the time of Franco's death, or to Castro's Cuba, where she saw, in the splendour of the full-grown trees now filling the garden of her old home, "the years of my life made real". At 80, she took off to inquire into the US invasion of Panama, stroppy as ever.

She dined with the BBC's John Simpson on his way to Bosnia. She saw off the East-West nuclear confrontation she most feared. She became part of the century's image bank. To the end, this fierce pacifist reported drinking red wine or iced Scotch with the children and grandchildren of fighters she had known.

Veronica Horwell

Martha Gellhorn, journalist, born November 8, 1908; died February 15, 1998

Out on her own . . . 'I am a loner', said Martha Gellhorn PHOTO: JANE BOWN

Writer in step with the German century

Ernst Jünger

THE death of Ernst Jünger at the great age of 102 ends both a legendary life packed with dramatic action, controversy and literary achievement, and a momentous era in German and European history. One of the last chroniclers of the first world war, in which he served as an officer on the Western Front, Jünger survived being wounded seven times to write his classic account of trench warfare Storm Of Steel (1920). His writing was just one facet of a wide range of activity, making him one of the 20th century's true Renaissance men; soldier, scholar, scientist, philosopher, political polemicist, diarist, correspondent, tireless traveller — Jünger was all these and more.

Born into a large middle-class family, Jünger tired early of the stifling restrictions of life in the dying days of the Wilhelmine Empire. His teenage revolt led him first to join the Wandervögel youth movement, and then to enlist in the French Foreign Legion, an episode entertainingly recalled in his book African Diversions. Brought back from the Sahara by an anxious father, he was just in time to join the army at the outbreak of war in 1914. Jünger's heroic combat experiences in the trenches won him Germany's top decorations, the Iron Cross and the Pour le Mérite medal, the coveted "Blue Max".

It also led him to formulate a theory of total war as the natural element of modern man. The ideas expressed in his war books of the early 1920s were the antithesis of the pacifism implied in Remarque's All Quiet On The Western Front. Jünger gloried in the shot and shell, the muck and ruck of comradely combat, praising the war for tearing down the bourgeois complacencies of the previous century. An ardent nationalist, who despised the democracy of the Weimar Republic, Jünger none the less fought shy of the rising National Socialist movement, rejecting an invitation to become a Nazi MP in 1927. He preached a revolutionary/reactionary creed, uniting nationalism and Bolshevism to realise his ideal of a society run by worker-soldier technocrats.

Quitting the army in 1923, Jünger studied zoology in Leipzig and Naples, and began a lifetime habit of travelling the world. Until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, his base was Berlin, where his friends ranged from Dr Josef Goebbels on the right to Bertolt Brecht on the left. He refused exile after the Nazi takeover, telling a friend with icy disdain: "I have chosen a high place from where I can watch people devour each other like bugs". This attitude of aristocratic detachment was reflected in his anti-Nazi allegory On The Marble Cliffs, published in 1939 and subsequently banned by Goebbels after it had become a bestseller.

Jünger rejoined the army on the outbreak of the second world war, which he spent as a staff officer in occupied Paris, his duties leaving him time to cultivate Cocteau, Céline and Picasso. Jünger was close to the aristocratic army officers plotting to overthrow Hitler, but when the bomb plot of July 20, 1944 misfired, he was dismissed from the army in disgrace.

His eldest son Ernstl was not so lucky: arrested for his resistance activities, he was forced to join a suicide squad in Italy where he fell at Carrara. Devastated, Jünger wrote and privately circulated The Peace — a call to Europe's youth to transcend nationalism and build a united continent.

In 1950, he moved to the village of Wilflingen on the Swabian Alps, which remained his home for the rest of his life. Here he held court in a manor house which doubled as a museum of wartime mementoes and a home for Jünger's vast collection of insects. A stream of visitors — writers like Borges, Alberto Moravia and Bruce Chatwin; politicians like Mitterrand and Kohl — were received with old-world courtesy.

His flair for stirring up controversy, however, was shown again with the publication of his "drug diaries", detailing his experiments with LSD, mescaline and psylocybin. His post-war novels included prophetic dystopias on the place of men in a world increasingly dominated by technology, like Heliopolis, The Glass Bees and Eumeswil.

Jünger sharply divided critical opinion on his place in the literary pantheon. In Britain, the critic George Steiner berated Jünger as a dandy and aesthete immune to the suffering of ordinary people, while men of the left like J P Stern and Stuart Hood, his translator, rated him in the late 1940s as the most important writer working in Germany. In old age he enjoyed his cult status which he probably considered his due.

Nigel Jones

Ernst Jünger, writer, soldier, scientist, born March 29, 1895; died February 17, 1998

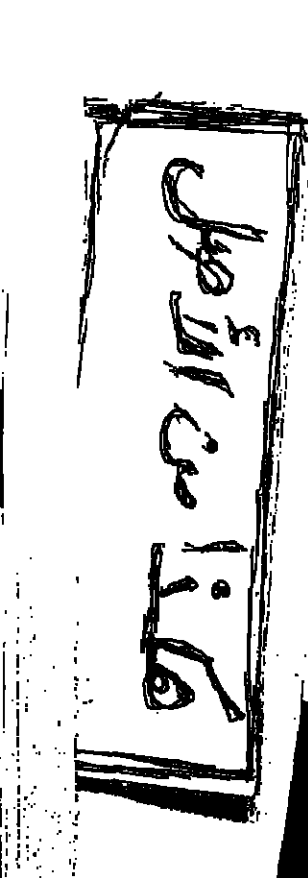


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Strange birds of a feather

Paul Evans

THERE are times when, even in the most urban of environments, a still and empty sky suddenly becomes full of birds. Perhaps the most dramatic examples are the swirling, spiralling crowds of starlings, thousands strong, which fill the city skies before roosting on warm buildings.

In the early morning here I can watch a colony of gulls rise from a nearby landfill site and form a living aerial cylinder which rotates until the gulls disperse to school playing fields to hunt where football boots have scuffed the turf.

Interestingly these colonies contain a mixture of species and always include a few black-backed gulls which are twice the size of the common gulls but seem to coexist quite peacefully.

One of the most fascinating bird flocks I've seen this winter consists of what I call the car-park birds. Pied wagtails are small, black and white, sort of half-timbered birds, which seem to have a neurotic bobbing, tail-flicking twitch. But this is not a display of nervousness, it's more like the movements of a boxer who ducks and weaves so as to become a difficult target and find the opening for attack. The pied wagtails like open, puddly places to hunt insects and have taken to car-parks and open spaces in towns.

This winter, all the pied wagtails in this town, between 30 and 100 birds, have gathered in the evenings to form a bouncing, flicking flock around the grounds of a college before settling down to roost in a group of Leyland cypress trees in a nearby garden.

Bird flocks are not just visually exciting, they make a most incredible noise, as I discovered a couple of days ago. Drawn towards the far end of the woods for no particular reason other than there just might be one, I wandered the tangle of animal pathways until a reason found me.

This weird finger of woodland points south between fields, a strip regenerated after the upheavals of excavation in the last century which left pits and mounds like the aftermath of a bombing strike. Recolonised by hawthorn, elder, ash, birch and oak, there's a strange mixture of scrub under the wiry trees. Just as flail cutters have battered the hedges along the lanes, so have the recent furious storms flailed through this wood, cracking up old thorns, smashing down trees leaving splintered trunks and white gashes.

The noise began like muffled radio static and intensified into an insane twittering, an aviary babble of what seemed like hundreds of invisible birds. This adrenalin-charged row seemed both carnival and riot. Shadowy forms flitted through the upper branches as others were recruited into the vortex. But this rave of birds was very aware. As I scrambled towards it there was a sudden hush — a thousand watching eyes in a crushing silence.

Whatever was being communicated had nothing to do with this gatecrasher, so I kept still, thought invisible thoughts, and the birds started up again. This was a gathering of the thrush clans — a mutation. Most were fieldfares, there may have been redwings, but there were mistle thrushes too.

What were these throstles up to? Called *bjorktrast* in Sweden and *gratrost* in Norway, were the fieldfares psyching themselves up for the journey north? Was this a parliament to thrash out the sexual politics of spring? Mistle thrush, otherwise known as storm-cocks, are said to be omens of bad weather — were they announcing or summoning?

This inter-species flocking expressed forces of the cosmos, a state neither completely chaotic nor yet ordered. On some collective decision, the mutation flew into the field, where each individual bird fell silent, gazing gravely into the wind.

Chess Leonard Barden

THE latest tournament for the grandmaster élite, the annual Hoogovens event at Wijk aan Zee, confirmed that Garry Kasparov still holds the whip hand over the International Chess Federation (Fide) in the credibility struggle between rival world champions.

Vishy Anand and Vlad Kramnik, Kasparov's selected duo to play a match for the right to be his challenger in October, shared first prize with 8½/13.

In contrast, Fide's champion, Anatoly Karpov, whom Kasparov recently dismissed as "like Bobby Fischer, a player from the past", played nine rounds without a single win and was next to bottom before a late recovery brought him to 50 per cent. It was still a dismal performance for a player who holds the all-time career record of 150 tournament first prizes.

Michael Adams was equal third, a point behind Anand and Kramnik, which was an even better result than it looked for the British number one. Adams, who spiced up his normal offbeat opening repertoire for the recent Fide knockout championship, seemed to use up his entire repertoire of new ideas in mainline openings there, and was back to his old routine of improvised, homespun variations at Wijk. He played the Four Knights And Bishops openings feebly as White, and fell into trouble by repeating a line that had served him badly against Nigel Short at Groningen.

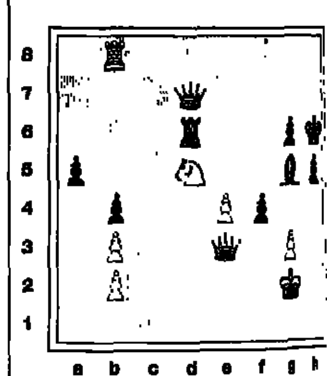
Despite two successive defeats in mid-tournament, Adams had gained confidence from his Groningen success and won several games in good style. His lack of prepared systems in the early stages of play is so pronounced, however, that this alone stops him being firmly established in the world's top six.

Adams should follow Kasparov, Karpov and the other top grandmasters and invest some of his £200,000 Groningen prize money in hiring a trainer-cum-theoretical researcher who could give him the grounding and ideas in mainline openings that are his main weakness. Here's a typical Adams win from Wijk — nondescript opening play redeemed by an endgame in virtuoso style:

Adams v Van der Sterren

1 e4 e5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 g3 Bc5 5 Bg2 d6 6 d3 a6 7 [illegible] 0-0 8 Be3 Bxe3 9 fxe3 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxd5 Qxd5 12 0-0 Qd6 13 Qe1 Bd7 14 [illegible] Rae8 15 Qf2 f5 16 d4 exd4 17 Nxd4 Qe5 18 Rfe1 Re7 19 [illegible] Nd8 20 Rd2 Bc8 21 Qf4 Nf7 22 Nf3 Qc5 23 Qd4 Qxd4 24 exd4 Rxe1+ 25 Nxe1 Re8 26 Nd3 a5 27 h4 g6 28 a3 Kg7 29 b4 axb4 30 axb4 Nd6 31 Nc5 Nf7 32 Nxf7 Kxf7 33 Kf2 c6 34 d5 cxd5 35 Rxd5 Re7 36 Rc5 Be6 37 Rb5 Bc8 38 Rb6 Ke8 39 Bd5 Kd8 40 c4 Kc7 41 Rf6 Bd7 42 b5 b6 43 Kf3 Re1 44 Kf4 Be8 45 Kg5 Rg1 46 Kh6 Rxg3 47 c5 bxc5 48 b6+ Kb8 49 Rd6 Resigns.

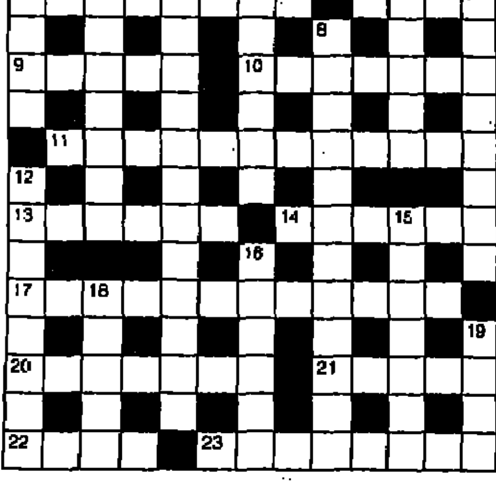
No 2512



Judit Polgar v Vishy Anand, Wijk 1998. Polgar holds her own or better with all the top men except for Kasparov, Kramnik and Anand. She at last laid one of the bogeys in this week's diagram. How does White (to play) win quickly?

No 2511: 1 . . . Qxe5? 2 Qxh7+ Nxh7 3 Rd8+ Nf8 4 Rh8+ Kxh8 5 Rxf8 mate.

Quick crossword no. 407



Across

1 Do (business) (8)
5 Money (4)
9 Turning instrument (5)
10 Electronic summoner (7)
11 Messages from fire (5,7)
13 Begrudge (6)
14 Of service (6)
17 Unbelievably virtuous person (7,5)
20 Willowherb (7)
21 Respond to stimulus (5)
22 Abominable snowman (4)
23 Spring flower (8)

Down

1 Inform (4)
2 Greek goddess (7)
3 Pipe conveying voice (8,4)
4 Art movement led by Picasso (6)
6 Greek letter (5)
7 Aggressive promotion (4,4)
8 Dunnock (5-7)
12 Possessions (8)
15 Amusements, rides, etc (7)
16 Coloured pencil (6)
18 Advantage (5)
19 Pace (4)

Last week's solution

OVERSENSITIVE
E A M C O O
SNAP PORTRAIT
E I A U M D
CREDITABLE
A H N C
STICKY SATIRE
E O C E
COMMERCIAL
B H O P O M
FULLTILT MOTH
T E S I I E
ATLANTICOCEAN

Bridge Zia Mahmood

CONGRATULATIONS to the winners of the Christmas Competition: Dennis Ash, of Exeter, has won the £100 first prize, and the two runners-up, who get £50 each, are William Vernon, from Venezuela, and Sheila Latham, from Rome.

Congratulations also to Geir Helgemo and Tor Helness of Norway, who won the Macallan International Pairs Championship in London in January. "Won" is an understatement — they had sewn up the event with two matches still to play, and their final score beat all previous records by miles. It was a feat of brilliance, remarkable for the way they consistently demolished the best pairs in the world. Nicola Smith and Pat Davies, the long-time top British ladies, finished second — a magnificent effort, and a pity that it was overshadowed by the Norwegians' achievement. Sabine Auken and Daniela von Arnim, from Germany, completed an excellent ladies' performance by finishing third.

I promised you a few weeks ago that I would let you know how my partnership with Andrew Robson fared in the Macallan. We finished sixth, which, I regret to say, was one place behind Jeff Meckstroth and Tony Forrester. I am hoping that one day Andrew will be able to forgive me! We might have been able to reverse those placings had this deal not occurred against the runaway winners. The result caused much hilarity when it flashed up on a screen in the Vugraph theatre — needless to say, it was all my fault.

But, I ask you, was what I did really so terrible? Here was my hand at Game All:

♠AKQ54 ♥654 ♦J43 ♣KQ

Andrew and I were playing a strong no trump of 15-17 points, so that was my choice of opening bid. You may feel that with the doubleton honour in clubs, weakness in the red suits and such powerful spades, I ought to have opened one spade rather than 1NT — and after what happened, I might very well agree with you. Helgemo, on my left, doubled 1NT for penalties, and the next two players both passed. What would you do with my hand now?

Well, if I could gain the lead, I felt that I had a good chance of taking six or seven tricks — and if the spade suit did not provide five winners, then I was unlikely to improve matters by retreating to two spades. The good news was that I did gain the lead. The bad news was that I had to wait until the next deal to do it! This was the full hand:

	North	
	♠ 1072	
	♥ K2	
	♦ 875	
	♣ 97654	
West		East
♠ 6		♠ J983
♥ 108		♥ AQJ973
♦ AKQ1096		♦ 2
♣ AJ103		♣ 82
	South	
	♠ AKQ54	
	♥ 654	
	♦ J43	
	♣ KQ	

South	West	North	East
Zia	H'gemo	R'son	H'ness
1NT	Dble	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Helgemo cashed his six diamonds, on which Helness signalled for a heart switch. Helgemo cashed the ace of clubs, then obediently led a heart for Helness to take the rest of the tricks. Seven down doubled meant a penalty of 2000. In Norway, the millennium celebrations began early.

Letter from Ecuador Maria Zuurmond

Mother of the future

WE ARRIVE in Tutinentsa late in the morning, after a beautiful and unusually smooth flight over the Ecuadorian rainforest. There is time to spare before the Shuar women's meeting, so we set off to visit another local community and attempt to disentangle a few local political problems. Ernestina says she will join us. Ernestina is a tiny, bird-like Shuar Indian whose size is deceptive of her energy and capacity to fight for change in her community.

We both find ourselves dragging behind the rest of the group as we clamber along the path. Ernestina lives in the Upano valley and says that she is no longer used to walking such distances, but I don't really have a good excuse except for some rather large Wellington boots that regularly get left behind in the mud.

It's unusual for a Shuar woman to be travelling by herself outside her own community, but Ernestina has recently been elected as the first director of the Shuar women's programme, which means that she has to travel a great deal to visit the women she represents. While we walk, she tells me her life story.

"I am lucky with my husband, although I didn't really start to respect him until after our fourth child," she says. She now has 14 children and proudly tells me that she gave birth to nearly all of them alone.

"Of course, the first time was difficult as I didn't know what to do with the umbilical cord". Fortunately a relative had been walking by the house at the time, and she was able to call out for some help to cut the cord. After that she was always able to do it for herself.

She explained that she grew up in a missionary convent where her parents left her at the age of six. One day the priest announced that the carpenter wanted to marry her, and he would give her a month to think about it.

"What was I to think in a month?" she asked me. She was only a young girl with no idea of love and wanted to study.

When she conveyed these feelings to the priest, he hit her and told her that young girls did not study. She was given three more months to think about it. During this time her parents visited her and were very angry. The carpenter had given them an axe, they said, and if she didn't agree to marry, then she would have to pay for it herself.

"What choice did I have?"

She made another couple of brave attempts to resist, but eventually married in the January of her 14th year, and gave birth to her first child that November. For the next 30 years, she adds, she has never menstruated, but simply gone from one pregnancy to the next.

I met Ernestina for the first time when she helped to organise the inaugural Shuar women's meeting. Her youngest child was clinging to her as she bravely stood up to demand greater women's representation from her own federation of indigenous Shuar Indians. Two years later she was elected as the first director of the women's programme.

ERNESTINA bubbles with optimism and enthusiasm. Many other people would have given up the fight, but it's almost as if the more she is attacked, the more energy she unearths from deep inside. In the elections of her federation, the hierarchy said that someone from the village without formal education couldn't possibly take on the responsibility of the women's programme. She has since proved them wrong.

Until recently Ernestina couldn't make a telephone call, but now she's sending e-mails around the world, and participating in virtual conferences.

She still retains her own distinct way of doing things. Last week we met so that I could collect a computer disk from her. She proceeded to empty the contents of her black-and-white vinyl handbag until she at last discovered the disk at the bottom, along with numerous sweet wrappers and other essential odds and ends. I explained that the disk was fragile, and that the information could be lost if she didn't look after it. She smiled as she absorbed this new piece of information. Next time, she promised, she will wrap it up in something.

After an hour of walking under the fierce sun, we arrive at the neighbouring village. Ernestina has taught me a lot on this short walk.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHAT is the longest English word with no recurring letters?

A WORD in which no letter of the alphabet appears more than once is called an isogram. The longest English isograms are uncopyrightable and dermatoglyphics, both of which contain 15 letters. See Richard Lederer's Crazy English (Sawd Books, 1992) for more fascinating trivia. — *Jonathan Brazier, Birmingham*

WHAT are the plastic bits on the end of shoelaces called?

THE word is "aglet". A chemist at Berkeley recently made a molecular version for stopping the ends of certain long intertwined molecules from fraying. — *Matthew Todd, Cambridge university*

THIS is a classic example of the family of names for things you didn't know had a name (and probably didn't care). Others are the indent at the bottom of a wine bottle (a kick or a punt) and the wire contraption on table lamps that keeps the shade off the bulb (a harp). — *Rob Shipway, London*

THE secondary purpose of an aglet is when purchasing a dictionary: if it doesn't include the word, then don't buy it. Another good word for this test is ferrule, the tip on the bottom of an umbrella. — *Robert Moye, London*

WHAT is the origin of the expression "to pop one's clogs"?

THIS dates back to the days when wearing clogs was the norm in Britain's northern mill towns, and impoverished workers would take their deceased relatives' footwear to the pawnbroker's and sell or pawn ("pop") them for a few coppers, often to help pay for the funeral. — *Rob Heys, Halifax*

WHAT'S wrong with cannibalism?

NOTHING, if you are a cannibal, bar that you are using a racist etymology. The word is derived from "Canibales", a Spanish variant of Caribes, the name of a West Indian nation. — *Arkaprabha Deb, Calcutta, India*

IN my experience, it's very hard to find a skillet of the right size. — *Arthur Lindley, Singapore*

IF, LIKE Britain's poor cattle, you were forced to become a cannibal, would you fancy eating Jack Cunningham? — *Jack Harris, Dursley, Gloucestershire*

THESE days we tend to consider that killing large numbers of people then not eating them is a mark of civilisation. There is a good argument for reintroducing cannibalism as a rule of warfare. Soldiers could be ordered not to proceed to the next battle until they have first eaten all the people killed in the previous battle. That should reduce the appetite for going to war. — *Nigel Lee, Nottingham*

WHY have men evolved with beards and women without?

MEN have not yet evolved to the stage where they can eat soup without dribbling. — *Quentin Burrell, Manchester*

Any answers?

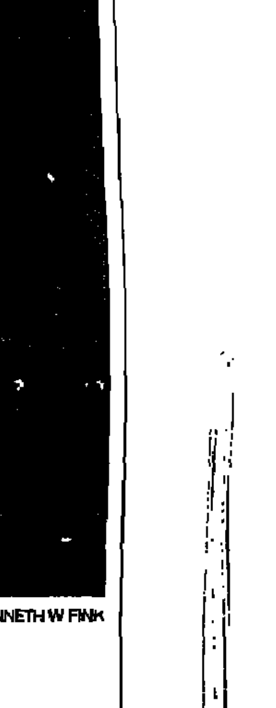
WHO started the practice of celebrating victory by spraying champagne over everybody within range? — *Bob Heys, Halifax*

WHAT does the tooth fairy do with all the children's teeth she collects? — *Natasha Shenfield, Providence, Rhode Island, USA*

WHY, on encountering cold air, does my nose run? — *Nicola Marshall, Leamington Spa*

IN WESTERN music, the fundamental major key, the one with no sharps or flats in it, is called "C". Why not "A"? — *Steve Barnes, Fremantle, Australia*

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/+44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://nq.guardian.co.uk/



The promiscuous ruddy duck has European conservationists in a flap PHOTOGRAPH: KENNETH W FINK

Lustful duck faces 'avian genocide'

David Harrison

BRITAIN is under pressure to slaughter thousands of sexually voracious wild ducks threatening the "genetic purity" of birds on the Continent.

More than 30 European and North African countries have urged Britain to cull 3,000 ruddy ducks which migrate to southern Spain and mate with white-headed ducks, creating fertile hybrid offspring resembling neither parent.

European conservationists say the white-heads' survival is endangered by the ruddy duck, *Oxyura jamaicensis*, so-called because of its russet-coloured body. In Spain the breed is regarded as an aggressive alien interloper and shot on sight.

Plans for a British cull were dropped last year by the then Environment Secretary, John Gummer, after furious protests by animal welfare groups, local authorities, and owners of land where the ducks breed.

Now European and North African signatories to the Berne Convention on protecting endangered plants and animals have agreed overwhelmingly at a meeting in Strasbourg to press Britain to start a cull "without delay".

Supporters want the cull to begin in the spring. They argue that alternatives, such as coating eggs with paraffin to prevent hatching, would take too long, and the white-billed duck, *Oxyura leucocephala*, needed "urgent action" to prevent it becoming extinct.

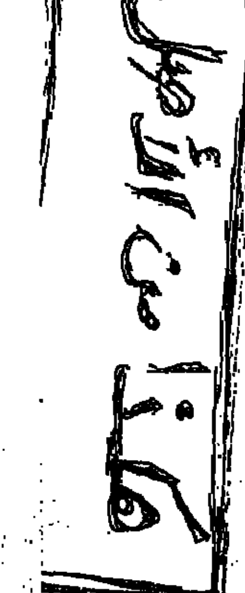
The slaughter is backed by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and other wildlife groups. A society spokesman, Chris Harbard, said: "We're realistic conservationists and saving the white-headed duck means an unpleasant decision."

Animal welfare groups denounced the cull as "avian eugenics" and "species racism". Andrew Tyler, director of Animal Aid, said: "It's the slaughter of an innocent species in the name of blood purity. Ruddy and white-headed ducks should mate if they produce healthy offspring. This is classic scapegoating in the name of conservation."

Ruddies were introduced to Britain when birds brought from North America escaped from the Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust in Gloucestershire in the 1950s. The breed has since found its way into 20 European countries, including Ukraine and Iceland. There are about 3,500 in Britain.

The cull to reduce the number to about 300 would be carried out by marksmen under the auspices of English Nature and would be centred on the Midlands, Yorkshire, Cheshire and Bristol.

The British Department of the Environment said British officials had informed the Environment Minister, Michael Meacher, of "the strength of feeling expressed by the convention" but he was still considering what steps to take. — *The Observer*





Elgar's third symphony is no longer unfinished. **Dan Glaister** on how it was completed, plus a review by **Andrew Clements**, below right

Composition accomplished

IT WAS, to borrow a phrase, better late than never. Last month, 66 years after it was originally commissioned and 64 years after his death, Elgar's unfinished Symphony No 3 received its world première. The work, finished — or "elaborated upon" — by the composer Anthony Payne, received a standing ovation from a packed audience at London's Royal Festival Hall.

Payne said he was exhilarated by the performance. "There was a real sense of occasion. Things happened which hadn't happened before. It just took off like a greyhound."

Alongside him, Andrew Davis, who conducted the performance by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, admitted that it had been strange playing a new piece by a composer who has been dead for more than 60 years.

"It is the weirdest feeling. It's like playing the music of a ghost except that he's alive."

Nicholas Kenyon, controller of BBC Radio 3 said: "In the end it doesn't matter if it sounds like Elgar, or who wrote which bit. The question is, does it work as a piece of music, and it most emphatically does."

The triumphant performance may finally put to rest a dispute that has disturbed the calm of Elgar enthusiasts. Some thought that Elgar's last reported wishes about the work — "Don't let anyone tinker with it" — should be respected. But the Elgar Trust agreed to allow Payne to finish the symphony.

In 1932 Elgar was commissioned by the BBC, at the urge of George Bernard Shaw, to write a symphony. The first performance was scheduled for May 1934 but Elgar died in February that year, leaving only sketches for the work. Although he had expressed a wish for these to be kept private — he even told one acquaintance that they should be burned — they found their way into the public domain.

In 1993 Payne was approached by the BBC to put some form to the sketches for a workshop. Inspired by the original material, he saw a way of putting a structure to the fragmentary sketches left by Elgar, and eventually completed the first and third movements.

The obstacle to completing the work, the objections of the Elgar family, was eventually overcome when it was realised that copyright would elapse and anyone would be able to tinker with the surviving sketches.

The obstacle to completing the work — the objections of the Eglar family — was eventually overcome when it was realised that copyright would elapse in 2005 and anyone would be able to tinker with the surviving sketches. So in 1995, the family commissioned Payne to complete the symphony.

The Elgar-Payne Symphony No 3 now joins the ranks of the other great completed unfinished works including Puccini's Turandot, Mozart's Requiem, Mahler's 10th Symphony, and Bartók's Violin Concerto.



The BBC Symphony Orchestra performs Elgar's unfinished Third Symphony, now completed by Anthony Payne PHOTO: MARTIN GODWIN

EDWARD ELGAR'S descendants took a brave step when they agreed to Anthony Payne's making an "elaboration" of the sketches for the Third Symphony, and there could not have been a more triumphant vindication of their boldness than the first public performance of the score last week, which ended with justified praise for Payne, conductor Andrew Davis and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

No one pretends that the result is unadulterated Elgar, though some passages incontrovertibly are. But what we can hear is a wonderfully satisfying symphonic structure, with the emotional sweep and bitter-sweet flavour of the real composer in every bar.

The structure has a breadth and natural pacing that are unmistakably Elgarian. The best tunes are as memorable as anything in the established works: the tender, delicate second theme of the first movement; the gossamer lightness of the scherzo; the stirring call to attention that opens the finale.

Where some of that music might have come from is perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the work. In his final years, Elgar was also working on his first opera (also left unfinished). It is reasonable to suppose that he studied other composers' stage works when writing his own. Perhaps that accounts for the flavour of Puccini at several points.

We like to think of Elgar as an unreconstructed romantic, but in fact he lived through the most tumultuous period in the history of music he was born a year after Schumann died, yet he died in the year that Harrison Birtwistle was born.

Perhaps at the end of life some of those huge changes started to seep into his own music, and perhaps had he lived to complete this work they would have been more apparent. But for what we are now able to hear of them, everyone should be hugely grateful to Anthony Payne.

The enemy of complacency

British theatre has sunk into a terrible rut, says **Michael Billington**. Time to stir the ghost of Brecht

IS BRECHT dead? It may seem a strange question to ask as we celebrate the centenary of his birth. But is Bertolt Brecht and all he stood for, as dramatist, director and theorist, now consigned to history?

Glancing round the British theatre today, you might be forgiven for thinking so. In Berlin, Robert Wilson has just staged his radio feature, Der Ozeanflug, at the Ensemble, and Brecht's iconic, cigar-smoking countenance adorns the cover of endless magazines. But here, only Manchester and Edinburgh are marking the Brecht birthday with new productions, although in the autumn Kathryn Hunter directs The Right Size in Mr Puntila And His Servant Matti at the Almeida theatre in London. Brecht, you might conclude, is thought to be slightly old hat in Britain. Yet now, more than ever, we need to re-examine Brecht and ask what he still has to teach us.

At first, the cards would seem to be stacked against him. Eric Bentley once quoted Brecht as saying that his future as a dramatist depended on the survival of socialism Even though Brecht himself espoused what George Steiner once called "a strategically astute, personalised Marxism", it would seem as if the collapse of European communism has dealt him a mortal blow. In Britain, we are living in an aggressively post-ideological age. It is no accident that two of last year's most popular theatrical revivals were of Waiting For Godot and The Chairs — plays based on the idea that mankind is helpless in the face of a meaningless universe.

Other factors today militate against him. His plays are costly to stage; most theatres are virtually bankrupt. His plays require companies; we have hardly any left. Above all, his plays require alert audiences and directors ready to have their assumptions challenged; yet we are heading towards a middlebrow cosiness symbolised by the — to me, anyway — astonishing fact that the National Theatre this summer will be offering us revivals of Oklahoma! and The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie.

Yet Brecht has had a decisive impact on British theatre. Richard Eyre speaks of the "epiphany" he felt on first seeing the Berliner Ensemble at the Old Vic in 1965, and of the way the Brechtian aesthetic has shaped his own work. David Hare rightly claims that Brecht radically affected classical theatre in the sixties: he points to Peter Hall's The Wars Of The Roses at Stratford and the work of William Gaskill and John Dexter at Olivier's National Theatre. Indeed, Brechtian values affected every aspect of British theatre: plays such as Osborne's The Entertainer and Bolt's A Man For All Seasons, the ascetic purity of Jocelyn Herbert's design and even the militant commitment of Ken Tynan's criticism were all heavily influenced by Brecht.

But where does that leave us today? Relics of Brecht's influence survive. In the shape of our theatres, for instance which, since the sixties, have been designed on anti-illusionist lines — think of the Olivier, the Swan, the Young Vic, as well as converted or "found" spaces such as Manchester's Royal Exchange or Glasgow's Tramway. "Epic theatre", with its emphasis on montage, reason and argument, has also left its mark on British dramaturgy. Even British acting is not unaffected by the Brechtian contradiction: that the spectators should feel different emotions from those being expressed on stage. Alex Jennings's current Hamlet, for instance, suffers suicidal angst; yet, far from empathising, we feel that his pain is in excess of the situation.

We seem to have lost the Brechtian art of creating anti-heroic heroes

Brecht is somehow invisibly present. Yet the truth is that British theatre in the late nineties is an odd mixture of influences, a weird compound made up of Brecht, Stanislavsky, Artaud, Brook, the violence of Tarantino, the showbiz spectacle of David Belasco and Cecil B De Mille, the physicality of Jacques Lecoq, the antic comedy of Dario Fo. We do the classics but we don't quite know why. And modern drama flails around in search of a defining form.

What do we remember Brecht for? Great roles, as well as great plays, that define particular moral dilemmas. Shen Teh, in The Good Person Of Sezchuan, forced to invent a ruthless male cousin in order to exist in an imperfect world; Mother Courage confronting the conflict between the business-ethic and an engulfing war; Galileo torn between subversive scientific truth and an oppressive Catholic Church. We possess many fine dramatists today, yet we seem to have lost the Brechtian art of creating anti-heroic heroes.

A key tenet of Brecht's thought was that "mankind is alterable and able to alter". We seem to have replaced that with a belief that we are all trapped by circumstance. Even the most visceral, popular young plays of today imply that there is little hope of change: in Patrick Marber's Closer the characters end up acknowledging their inviolable solitude, in Phyllis Nagy's Never Land the hero is quite clearly the victim of fate. Of plays currently on offer, only Hare's Amy's View implies the possibility of redemption. But you don't have to buy Brecht's personalised Marxism to believe that society and the individual can be changed.

Brecht also has much to teach us about the classics — Shakespeare especially. It doesn't mean applying the same style to every play; what it does mean is asking the same questions. Why are we doing the play? In what world is it taking place? And what are the social relationships between the characters?

Man cannot live by Brecht alone. I accept that. He is now simply one of a variety of influences at work. But Brecht brought to theatre a fundamental seriousness, a rigorous aesthetic, and a belief in the capacity for action and change that we have lost in our current complacency. Brecht still has much to teach us, and this seems as good a time as any to start learning.

Michael Billington was voted Critic of the Year for the third time in five years at last month's Critics' Circle Awards.

The gorillas won't ape it

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

EXPENSIVE and extensive research has revealed that [...]se who watch TV at three [...]ock in the afternoon are [...]ndlers/people waiting in for [...]mbers/plumbers/gorillas. [...] many people know that, but [...]mply accounts for daytime TV.

The news about gorillas' view[...]g habits came in Lion Country (BBC1), a daytime documentary [...]ut Longleat House in Wilt[...]re, its people and its animals, [...]ch will run every afternoon [...] 11 weeks. That's a lot of tape. [...] as the BBC prefers to put it, [...]e of the most ambitious factual [...]jects ever undertaken for TV.

Longleat's gorillas are Nico [...] Samba. They live on an [...]land, are childless and remind [...] very much of Victor and [...]rgaret Meldrew. As their [...]eper said, "They have mated [...] in 36 years and now they're [...] old. She definitely doesn't [...] him attractive and makes it [...] obvious. She's been known [...] him with a stick on the odd [...]casion to keep him away.

"We's shown them videos of [...]las interacting," he added [...]ately, "to see if that helps [...] if anything, that puts them [...] They're more interested in [...]g what other gorillas get up [...]" The gorillas were first given [...] to pass the longueurs of [...]ptime and, when that was [...], it seemed a shame to [...] them of what was so [...]sly a pleasure. They even [...]laud, a reaction I have only [...]ed before among actors.

The disturbing suggestion that [...] affects fertility deserves [...]per analysis (and, frankly, [...]d all like to know which [...]gramme a gorilla prefers so [...] can have a good laugh), but [...] Country is not like that. It [...] sleepy, amiable and endless, [...] Esmeralda the 15-foot [...]thon. (According to her proud [...]eper, "she's made of pure [...]uscle!" but you'd never guess [...] to look at her.)

The most exotic animal at [...]ngleat is, of course, Lord Bath [...]self. When his father suc[...]ded to the title, he looked at [...]ngleat as though it were a [...]y dog that had attached itself [...] him and said, with irritated [...]speration, "I can't look after [...]!" He did look after it, [...]ough, by opening the house to [...] public and turning the [...]ounds into a safari park.

The entertaining thing about [...] hereditary system is you [...]ver know what's going to pop [...] of the box next. The present [...]rquess was quite a shock. He [...] meant to be a hippy but the [...]rk got lost. His paintings are [...] idiosyncratic as his domestic [...]rangements. The guides won't [...]swer questions about his [...]felets, but he will.

He is apt to enliven the House [...] Lords with a call for the devo[...]tion of Wessex. Most peers get [...]ged up for the State Opening [...] private where people won't [...]int. Not Lord Bath. He strug[...]ed into all the gorgeous scarlet [...]ggery at home and hailed a [...] in the street, crying resplen[...]ntly "House of Lords!"

Love among the Troubles . . . Daniel Day-Lewis and Emily Watson in Jim Sheridan's The Boxer

My right hook

CINEMA
Richard Williams

A WOMAN is watching a boxing match. One of the fighters is an old boyfriend. He wins, and searches for her face in the crowd. Needing to disguise the depth of her allegiance, she gives her neighbour a little smile and a shrug, then turns away. It's a moment of subtlety, one of many devised to counterpoint the harshness of the topics that concern The Boxer.

Can you take another film about boxing? Can you take another film about Northern Ireland? You can. You will. This is the third collaboration between the writer-director Jim Sheridan and the actor Daniel Day-Lewis. After the success of My Left Foot and In The Name Of The Father we come to their projects with high expectations, so it must have been my fault that the advance publicity had fooled me into expecting a film primarily about Day-Lewis's immersion in the craft and culture of boxing. I was wrong.

Set in West Belfast, The Boxer is about conflict, and how hard it can be to resolve. And although it may simply be a very good film, rather than a great one, I came out of it feeling that hardly ever do you see a movie so carefully and honestly analysing the complexity of conflict, so intelligent in its exposure of the roots of evil acts, so unwilling to cut emotional corners.

Day-Lewis plays Danny "Boy" Kelly, 32 years old, a former boxing prodigy and IRA soldier. When we meet him he's being released after 14 years in jail, where he kept himself fit, changed his mind about the application of violence to political problems, and cocooned himself in near-silence. He goes looking for his old trainer, Ike (Ken Stott), who's hit the bottle. Together they return to the site of their old non-sectarian boxing club, and decide to revive it.

The gym is part of a community centre, where Danny can't avoid seeing Maggie (Emily Watson), his pre-jail sweetheart and the daughter of an IRA boss. While Danny was inside, Maggie married his best friend. Now the husband is inside, and Maggie is bringing up a schoolboy son. Danny and Maggie circle each other; eventually she breaks his silence. But, as an IRA prisoner's wife, she may not publicly respond to the rebirth of their relationship, and their meetings have to take place clandestinely — the riskiest being a tryst on the Protestant side of the "peace line".

Around them swirl the lethal disagreements created by the peace process. Maggie's father (Brian Cox) sees the ceasefire as a logical step. His lieutenant, Harry (Gerard McSorley), is implacably opposed. To him, Danny and Maggie — and the boxing club — symbolise betrayal and surrender.

On the surface, nothing about the film is remotely original, from the basic Angels With Dirty Faces setting to the story of lovers separated by war. What makes the film exceptional is the three-dimensional nature of its humanity, reflected in a set of fine performances. Only the dismissal of Maggie's marriage — a key point, licensing the audience's approval of her interest in Danny — seems poorly explained.

And the boxing? Day-Lewis is completely convincing, thanks to Barry McGuigan's tutelage and his own aptitude and enthusiasm. Filmed by Chris Menges and edited by Gerry Hambling with enormous verve, the fight sequences transcend their rather clunky metaphorical significance. A real referee would have stopped the climactic bout half a minute earlier, but this perceptive, affecting and entertaining film certainly earns its right to go the distance.

Neil Jordan's adaptation of **The Butcher Boy**, Patrick McCabe's exceptional 1992 novel, is distinguished by the performance of Eamonn Owens as Francie Brady, the only son of a dysfunctional Southern Irish family. This is a boy whose naughtiness shades helplessly into real mischief, a Holden Caulfield or a William Brown taken to the limit.

For all the artfulness of Jordan's direction, which includes the apparition of Sinead O'Connor as a cherishably down-to-earth Virgin Mary, the film's credibility rests on our response to a boy with a penchant for redressing slights via arson and homicide. The red-haired, blunt-featured, 15-year-old Owens conveys the distorted enthusiasm of the somewhat younger Francie with great conviction. Stephen Rea plays both his father, a feckless musician, and the grown-up Francie we see in the final sequence; as a priest in charge of a reformatory, Brendan Gleeson produces the latest in a string of memorable performances.

When Sergei Bodrov's **Prisoner of the Mountains** was premiered in Russia two years ago, the war in Chechenya was still on the go. To us, it is remarkable not just for its dramatic integrity but for the sense of another world in its portrayal of the conflict between the Russian army and the Chechen nationalists.

Two Russian soldiers, the wily Sacha (Oleg Menchikov) and the naive Vanya (Sergei Bodrov Jr) are captured and offered in exchange for the son of a Chechen elder. When negotiations go awry, the causes of the war are exposed.

Scenery, acting and music work wonderfully well together. The sight of a Muslim cemetery, a field of crooked stones, is quietly breathtaking. Black irony is everywhere, not least when the soldiers, in leg-irons, are led into the mountains to the sound of Louis Armstrong leading a gospel choir in Let My People Go. And the relationship between Vanya and Dina, the elder's 12-year-old daughter, played by Susanna Makhralieva, becomes a thing of uncategorisable tenderness.

Golden Bear hug for Brazilian odyssey

BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL
Derek Malcolm

DESPITE the presence of several Oscar-nominated Hollywood epics in the competition, Berlin's 48th Film Festival gave its Golden Bear this week to a much smaller film from Brazil, Walter Salles's Central Station. This was the first time that a Latin American film has gathered itself a major European festival award since 1981, when Leon Hirszman's They Don't Wear Black Tie won the special jury prize at the Venice festival.

Hirszman was a representative of the radical *cinema novo* movement of the sixties and seventies. Salles is a young director attempting to get away from the commercialisation of Brazilian cinema since that era.

His film, a well-made and sympathetic neo-realist portrait of an unemployed teacher, who now writes letters for the illiterate, and her friendship with a 14-year-old boy she finds on Rio de Janeiro's Central Station, leaves Rio for the countryside halfway through. It thus moves into the same territory where many of the cinema novo directors, such as Glauber Rocha, shot their best work.

The award was scarcely a surprise, even at this mammoth festival, now easily the largest in Europe, where such American stars as Robert De Niro rub shoulders with actors and directors from some of the smallest film-making countries in the world. Central Station was one of the most popular films in the competition, suggesting that the public still want to see simple, warm-hearted human stories.

In addition, Fernanda Montenegro won the best actress prize for her part as the former teacher, a woman who at first tries to sell the boy to an illegal adoption agency before setting off with him to find his father.

The Americans, however, won several prizes. Barry Levinson's Wag The Dog, with De Niro and Dustin Hoffman, won the special jury award; Ben Affleck, the young writer and star of Gus Van Sant's Good Will Hunting, was given the prize for the best single achievement; and Samuel L Jackson won best actor prize for his role in Quentin Tarantino's overlong but impressive Jackie Brown.

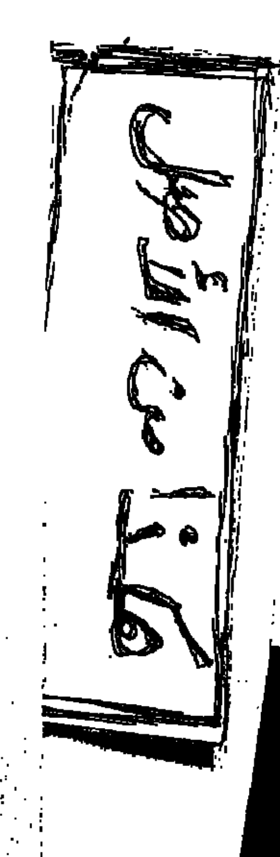
One of the finest films in the competition, however, was Alain Resnais's Same Old Song, a tribute to the British playwright Dennis Potter in which the cast sing (mostly dubbed) snatches of popular songs from the thirties, forties and fifties as the ironically romantic plot develops.

It is the most successful film the 75-year-old Resnais, director of a string of famous art movies in the sixties, has made in terms of the French box-office, and he might have got more for it than the career award the international jury gave him.

The other much-liked film was Neil Jordan's The Butcher Boy, which won him best director and Eamonn Owens a special mention as the young lead in this tough film about growing up in Ireland.

Only one very worthy effort was overlooked — the Australian film The Boys, taken by Rowan Woods from a play by Gordon Graham: it is a coruscating drama about a working-class family whose sons are involved in a rape and murder.

Finally, the international critics prize for the Forum programme, which specialises in radical cinema, went to the Israeli director Ron Havilio for his six-hour docu-drama called Fragments: Jerusalem. The film took him more than 10 years to piece together from archive footage and is a unique social, cultural and political history of the city during a troubled century.



Where pluralism is the order of the day

Peter Hennessy

Parliament Under Pressure
by Peter Riddell
Gollancz 256pp £20

PETER RIDDELL straddles more successfully than any other political commentator the jagged edge, sharpened by mutual parody and even incomprehensibility, which all too often separates those who practise government and politics in Whitehall and Westminster from those who write about them in British universities.

He is abreast of the scholarly literature and is sometimes its sole megaphone in the quality press, where he trims its findings of jargon and opacity before projecting them to a wider audience. In the reverse direction, he absorbs the realities and the hidden processes of life in No 10, the Cabinet Room, the Civil Service and Parliament before transmitting them to those whose lives are largely bounded by the library and the seminar room.

Riddell's singular status arises from his being listened to with particular care from the Prime Minister down to undergraduates. Both will need to read and absorb Parliament Under Pressure swiftly and fully.

Why? Because there is a danger that the crucial, central motor of legitimacy, accountability and scrutiny in Britain's system of government will fail amid the flurry of constitutional changes that will leave their transforming imprint on the UK as the centuries turn.

Westminster faces a battery of rivals but seems largely oblivious to the phenomenon, even within the ranks of the Commons' own select committee on modernisation. Riddell anatomises them coolly and carefully: from the planned Scottish Assembly, through the European Union (its Council of Ministers, Commission, Parliament and Court), and a UK judiciary waving the soon-to-be-incorporated European Convention on Human Rights, to the privatised utility regulators, pressure groups, think tanks and a media whose attention span is fast diminishing to that of a flea.

Riddell is not a romantic about Parliament past or present. Neither does he fall for a "golden age" fallacy of a sovereign legislature whose reach trumped all other forms of power and influence. His reform plan eschews the "big bang" approach of those who argue that true modernity lies in a polity rid of its monarchy, driven by the kind of rationality that only a fully written constitution can provide. It is, however, a realisable prospectus for boosting the parliamentary element in our system which will discomfit not just the "big bangers" but the very executive-minded occupant of No 10, who does not warm to the idea of institutionalised criticism.

For, as Riddell recognises, the Blair programme is built on a paradox — a reshaping of the state with greater pluralism as its goal, driven by the kind of self-belief and disdain for dissent that is shaping up to outstrip even Mrs Thatcher herself.



Men of the North West Frontier constabulary at Shabkader during the second world war PHOTO: HULTON GETTY

Imperial Britain's last call to arms

Alexander Frater

Our War: How the British Commonwealth Fought the Second World War
by Christopher Somerville
Weidenfeld & Nicolson 364pp £25

YOU can spot old servicemen becalmed in the aliens' queue at Heathrow after a Qantas or Air New Zealand arrival. Apart from their age and a few badges there's nothing to indicate they perhaps survived Tobruk or 50 missions over Germany. That only happens when you see them suddenly comprehend that, while they stand corralled with the lepers, across in the EU channel old Luftwaffe personnel, Italian fascists and Vichy French collaborators (all gaily flourishing their claret passports) go hurtling through unimpeded. Then their eyes grow flinty.

These are recollections of the second world war told largely in the words of ageing Commonwealth combatants like them. Five million joined up, 170,000 lost their lives. It may seem eccentric to produce a volume of martial memoirs so long after the event but Somerville (who has an ancestral interest; his grandfather was a wartime Admiral of the Fleet) got lucky. Faced by a diminishing choir of voices he still managed to find several dozen lucid, articulate men and women with long memories; they, in turn, found a skilled and sympathetic inquisitor. This book may be overdue but it's been worth the wait.

When Chamberlain made his apocalyptic broadcast on September 3, 1939, India and the colonies found, much to their surprise, that they had declared war on Germany too; London's clever constitutional lawyers ensured all that was buried in the small print. (Though many Indians expressed anger, 2.5 million eventually elected to fight.) Meanwhile out in the dominions — free to make up their own minds — Australia and New Zealand moved immediately, South Africa dithered for days, Canada waited a whole week.

Yet the Canadians, all volunteers, have contributed some of the book's more robust interviews. In Britain they were kept hanging around endlessly, being drilled by British NCOs they detested and confronted by social attitudes they deplored. "This class system," recalled Charlie Hobbs, "it showed up, and the Canadians resented it . . . When we were stationed at Upper Heyford we were close to Oxford. Here's this gorgeous old university, with the fellers going to lectures with the fancy scarf around their neck; and here we are from 5,000 miles away, fighting their battles for them!"

Some blamed Churchill for months of tedium and inactivity. "He had a hatred for Canadians, maybe because we were gallivanting, or taking his women around."

Certainly, when he finally acted, he did them no favours, assigning them to Mountbatten's botched Dieppe Raid; 906 perished, a further 2,195 were marched off to prison camps. Preparations for the fiasco, one claimed, could be followed by any German with binoculars on the French coast. "They were there waiting for us. In fact, one . . . actually asked, 'What took you so long?'"

The Australians didn't care for Churchill either, mainly because of his reluctance to allow them home after Japan's declaration. "I don't think Churchill thought more of the Australians", remarked one, "than we thought of him." Another recalled the acrimonious exchange of telegrams between Downing Street and the new Labour PM John Curtin "who wouldn't be bullied. The upshot was that Curtin said, 'They're my troops: get stuffed'."

The emotions Churchill seemed unable to comprehend were expressed by a retired Melbourne solicitor and New Guinea veteran. "You were fighting, literally, for Australia . . . We had to do it, otherwise our loved ones at home would have been . . . gone."

Occasionally Somerville's linking text reads as if written for GCSE purposes: "India, the jewel in the crown, was the paramount symbol of the power and pride of Imperial Britain . . . How the British had managed to hold it all together for so long is hard to explain." (Though he does try.)

Enlightenment is provided by his interviewees — a Canadian rear-gunner likening the sound of flak to "eating apples in church"; a Kiwi sergeant major asking recruits if they could play the piano then sending any pianists off to shovel coal; an Indian soldier at Kohima witnessing Japan's genius for improvisation — an elephant with a howitzer on its back. And a young British naval officer, ordered to capture the Vichy island of Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, landing "in the whaler with my braves", finding everyone asleep and the Governor "in bed with somebody else's wife".

A war intended to save the Empire led, ultimately, to its dissolution. People who endured shelling by the enemy and, in many cases, racial discrimination by "friends" planned certain changes when they arrived home. The first African to be granted a commission in Britain, Sergeant Seth Anthony from the Gold Coast — known, wittily, as Blondie — was, until somebody intervened, to be paid Malta Artillery rates, or two-thirds of what the whites got.

Dudley Thompson, a Jamaican navigator bomb-aimer who flew Lancasters over Germany, recalls wryly: "There were feelings that men of colour had not properly proved themselves as combatants." But combat helped him clarify his own ideas; he became a Rhodes Scholar, a QC and a member of Jamaica's senate, fought colonialism — "Just half a stage from slavery" — tooth and nail. But even he never had to endure the ignominy South Africa imposed on its black soldiers.

SINCE Pretoria didn't want them trained in the use of modern weaponry the 77,239 men who enlisted in the Native Military Corps drilled with assegais, were given non-combatant roles and never allowed to forget their status; "army discipline stipulated that an African sergeant should take orders from a European private."

Yet they faced the enemy together and, when 224 members of their Fifth Infantry Brigade died near Tobruk, white soldiers and black stretcher bearers were buried in a common grave — until South African army headquarters decreed that the corpses be exhumed and buried separately. Whites who made it home received a plot of land, a government grant and a free university place. The blacks, recalls Frank Sexwale: "were given about £6 — that included a pair of trousers — and a bicycle if you had a job. Personally I did not even get a bicycle, because I was not employed. They said to me, 'Well, you have no job — you don't need a bicycle'."

Crime

Lucretia Stewart

The Hanging Garden, by I… Rankin (Orion, £16.99)

THERE'S gang warfare … streets of Edinburgh … Newcastle, a Chechen gang… Pink Eyes, is bringing refuge… Britain and running them a… tutes. Inspector John Rebu… Rankin's Scots cop hero, is … down in paperwork from his … gation of a suspected Nazi wa… inal. When he rescues a … Bosnian prostitute calling … Candice, who reminds him … daughter, he finds himself … personally caught up in this … ing violence. Gritty, authent… superbly written.

Dead Room Farce, by Simo… Brett (Gollancz, £16.99)

JOBBING actor Charles … the most endearing chara… crime fiction today, always … same problems: sex, booze, … money and getting older. Her… is, wrestling with them whil… pearing in a farce called No… Your Wife. Then someone die… Charles, as usual, comes in… own.

The Butterfly Effect, by Pernille Rygg (Harvill, £16…)

TERRIFIC first novel by a … Norwegian writer. It is … Oslo where Igi Heitmann's … private detective, was killed … and-run incident. Igi remains … vinced that her father's dea… an accident; the discovery … body of a young woman in a … ing church seems to reinfo… suspicions.

Pentecost Alley, by Anne … (Collins Crime, £16.99)

EXCELLENT thriller fea… husband-and-wife Thom… Charlotte Pitt. Barely two … after Jack the Ripper terroris… East End, a killer is once m… work in the backstree… Whitechapel and going … prostitutes. Despite the Vic… setting, the novel has a co… orary feel and is adm… well-written.

Lipstick and Lies, by Lesl… Grant-Adamson (Hodder & Stoughton, £16.99)

EVEN though she is now … aged, Anna can never … the date of her mother's m… nor the date when the ma… victed of that murder was h… When a lawyer investigating … riages of justice starts diggi… the past, Anna is forced to re… ber things she would rather … Intriguing story about chi… and memory in which thing… revealed not to be as they see…

…bert's account of the 1967 Six Day war is a gripping read

…t the crossroads of history

…id Cesarani

…: A History
…rtin Gilbert
…day 619pp £25

…RAEL'S 50th birthday celebra…ions are in disarray, a muddle …oduced by fiscal stringency …ideological confusion. Plans for …, symbolic events have been …ped amidst popular apathy. Ac…ing to the Jerusalem Report, …e's little sense of unity, and not … much agreement on what it …s to be Israeli or Zionist".

…s uncertainty is faintly regis…d in Martin Gilbert's epic ac…t of Israel's origins, birth and … five decades. Gilbert epito…es the view from without: the ad…ing gaze of the Jewish Diaspora, …er than the interrogative mood …rious to Israel. As usual he …ts the style and structure of …nicle, presenting events in …t sequence. He effaces the nar…r's voice, making documents, …mony and memoirs tell the …y. The narrative rattles along, …addicts of his unique approach …feel instantly at home.

…e begins with the forerunners … founders of the Zionist move…t and follows its progress settle…t by painful settlement. Zionism …loped many strands, but his …pathies lie with the youthful, …alist pioneers and those, like … Motzkin, who as early as 1898 …sed that the Arab population …d not be ignored.

…ilbert excels at diplomatic his…, charting Theodor Herzl's pere…ations around the chanceries of …ope, the origins of the Balfour …laration in 1917, and the dy…ic between British and Zionist …y while Palestine was ruled …m Whitehall. Parallel sections on … gradual flowering of the *yishuv*, … modern Jewish community of …stine, suffer badly from the …odic structure.

The savage tripartite war be…en Jews, Arabs and, decreas…ly, the British from 1945 to 1949 …recounted unsparingly. Gilbert in…porates the explosive "new his…y" researched by young Jewish …torians that challenges many of …ael's founding myths.

Yosef Weitz, director of the Lands …partment of the Jewish National …nd, is quoted relishing the …ance which the fighting gave to remove Arabs from areas allotted to the Israeli state by the United Nations partition plan in 1947. When Yigal Allon, an army commander charged with enforcing "Plan D", which sanctioned the expulsion of Arabs from strategically sensitive zones and captured territory, asked Ben Gurion, the prime minister, what to do about the 50,000 Arabs of Lydda and Ramle, the leader replied: "Expel them."

Gilbert records that hundreds of Palestinians perished in this ethnic cleansing while the remainder laboured under repressive legislation until the 1960s. This much-delayed acknowledgment of injustice is an essential ingredient of any reconciliation between Jews and Arabs.

Compared with his brilliant evocation of the battlefield, the treatment of Israel's social and economic development is disappointing. With questionable judgment Gilbert uses Fodor's guide to Israel to explain the social and ethnic tensions of the 1970s.

Ben Gurion is the hero, bullying a diverse population into a nation, but little is said about the cost. Zionism became an insipid statism. The past was literally excavated for integrative myths, such as the Zealots' "heroic defence" of Massada against the Romans, which engendered an essentially negative, defensive mentality. From Massada to the Warsaw Ghetto, Jews were depicted fighting and dying heroically, but for what? Once the existential threat subsided this question would implode Israeli society.

Culture is the key to understanding Israel's angst, although Gilbert covers it skimpily. He is happiest with diplomacy and military history, giving an exemplary account of the 1956 Suez campaign without fudging the blatant anti-Egyptian collusion between Israel, France and Britain. The account of the 1967 Six Day war is a gripping read, while his narrative of the Yom Kippur war is immensely moving. Golda Meir's obduracy provoked that war, but she escapes lightly at Gilbert's hands. He is less charitable to the advocates of settlement in the occupied territories who were galvanised by Israel's 1967 victory, or the divisive religious extremism that burgeoned in its wake.

Gilbert's affection is with the "other Israel" of Peace Now and Eli Geva, the tank commander who refused to bombard Beirut during the disastrous 1982 Lebanese venture. This is a very personal history, reflecting Gilbert's friendship with Shimon Peres and his admiration for Yitzhak Rabin. Their lives are a thread running through the story, more textured than the careers of Begin, Shamir and Netanyahu.

After briskly narrating the road to the peace process, its initial, euphoric stages and Rabin's assassination, the book suffers a dying fall. It ends with a rather perfunctory summary of Israeli society in the 1990s. His failure to get under the skin of Israeli life is the greatest weakness of this otherwise admirable chronicle. Gilbert nods towards the emergence of a vibrant Hebrew culture, but there is no mention of Israel's pulsating rock music scene, its dynamic film industry, or the ethnic sub-cultures and popular religion that together bind Israeli society more effectively than clapped-out Zionist rhetoric.

THE founders hoped Israel would be a light to the nations and regenerate world Jewry. In this respect, it is a glorious failure. At 50, Israel has to decide whether to be a Jewish state or a state which includes many faiths and ethnicities. It has to decide whether to be a pluralistic democracy which gives equal rights to all those under its sovereignty, or to perpetuate domination over another people. Even if Israelis opt for a modest but "Jewish" state, they still have to decide the content of that Jewishness. If religious orthodoxy sets the benchmark, civil rights will suffer and so will ties to the Diaspora, which is predominantly non-orthodox.

Most likely, a synthesis will emerge like the hip-hop *chazanut* (rabbinic singing) or the Hebrew ballads sung to Arabic melodies played on electric guitars by blond, blue-eyed "Jews" from Odessa who have decided on the basis of their own hybrid experience that it is better to live by messy compromise than to die for neat dogma. The fact that the disorderly and unconstrained debate goes on despite the strain of war and the burden of mass immigration is the true monument to Israel's achievement.

If you would like to order Israel: A History at the special price of £20, contact CultureShop (See page 28)

Lithuanian odyssey

Anthony Julius

Heschel's Kingdom
by Dan Jacobson
Hamish Hamilton 256pp £15.99

IF ONE wanted to write an autobiography, where would one start? Not, of course, with the moment of one's own arrival in the world. That would amount to the claim that one was self-created, which is self-evidently absurd. Perhaps, then, with one's parents, one's authors. That at least would offer some context, some explanatory background, to one's life. But what about one's grandparents, or at least a grandparent whose life had a special bearing on one's own? Wouldn't that ancestor also deserve a place in any conscientious account of one's life?

Although Dan Jacobson's book is more than an autobiography, he answers this question affirmatively, and illuminatingly. His account of his grandfather's life, and the lives of his grandfather's family, supplements the autobiographical Time And Time Again, which placed Jacobson first in South Africa, and then in England. In Heschel's Kingdom, South Africa still figures, but England has given way to Lithuania, as Jacobson makes the journey to the country of his grandparents. It's the most recent of four important journeys recounted in the book. "By evoking the shadow of my grandfather," writes Jacobson, "I hope to discover elements in his life and mine which are now hidden from me."

Jacobson's maternal grandfather, Heschel Melamed, a rabbi with a community in the Lithuanian town of Varniai, visited the United States in 1912. He intended to bring his family over, provided that what he saw met with his approval. But it did not. The Jews were secular, or at least non-observant. It was not a place in which Orthodox Jews would want to live. (He did not appreciate — and who can blame him? — that Lithuania would shortly cease to be a place where Jews of any kind could live). His assessment of the US was not altogether misconceived. Though there are certainly pockets of orthodoxy in America, the rate of assimilation is very high and the chances are that Heschel's family would not have remained faithful to the tenets of Judaism had they emigrated there.

And so the family stayed in Lithuania — their one chance of escaping the Holocaust denied to them by Heschel's commitment to religious orthodoxy. But then, just seven years later, Heschel died. This early, unexpected death was the saving of them. So important and benign an event was it that Jacobson describes it as a gift: "the kindest thing [Heschel] did for his wife and children was to die quite suddenly, at the age of 53, leaving them penniless and helpless." This predicament prompted the family to leave their home, though for South Africa rather than the US.

Had Heschel not died prematurely, Jacobson is convinced that they would have stayed in Lithuania right up to the Nazi invasion, when their fate would have been sealed. Such was the horrendous speed of the slaughter that between June and August 1941, most of the Jews in the provinces were murdered; between September and November, most of the Jews in the cities met a similar end. As Jacobson recounts this terrible time, "in towns and villages scattered all over Lithuania, a country roughly the size of Ireland, 600 years of Jewish life were brought to an end over a period of 10 weeks only". Only one in 20 Jews survived the war.

As it was, Heschel's family were among the lucky few beyond the embrace of that statistic. In South Africa they found safety and precisely that secular alternative to orthodoxy whose prospect had so dismayed Heschel. Thus, despite his best efforts, his family did not stay in Lithuania and did not remain religious, though this did not lead them (Jacobson remarks with pride) "to adopt the banally leftwing views which attracted so many secular Jews of their generation". Jacobson traces the trajectory of their lives in Kimberley, though what they did there seems to matter rather less than the fact that they were there, rather than in Lithuania. It is as if, in answer to the question, "What was their South Africa like?", the best and most revealing answer to be given is: "It wasn't Lithuania."

And so, after many years of living in one not-Lithuania (South Africa) and then another (England), Jacobson decided to visit Lithuania itself. Heschel's Kingdom is, in part, the book of that journey, although to describe it as a travel book would be an injustice to the complexity of its achievement. With his son Simon, he stayed first in Vilnius, then in Varniai itself, and then in Kelme. He found the seediness that one would expect, and the poverty, of course, and also traces of anti-Semitism. (In an unpleasant, slightly ambiguous experience, Jacobson is spat at by someone in the crowd. "Why?" asks Simon. "Because I am a Jew," replies Jacobson.)



Jacobson: masterly work

What he did not find, however, is any trace of his grandfather. He has had for years odd items of his grandfather's — a photograph, an address book, a spectacles case and some spectacles — but when he goes back he finds nothing. This "failure", Jacobson remarks, "did not dishearten or disappoint me. On the contrary, I had come close enough to it, and to him."

Near the end of this masterly and moving work, Jacobson tells a story about the memorial stone in Kelme commemorating the massacre of Jews there. The inscription understates the number killed: 483 rather than something close to 2,000. Local Jews complained, but were compelled to give way. And then, their spokesman said, with irony: "All right, you can put down the number you want. But then you've got to give us back the missing fifteen hundred people. Alive." On which Jacobson comments: "That, I suppose must be called a Jewish joke."

Football Premiership: Southampton 3 Blackburn Rovers 0

Dream ticket torn to tatters

Russell Thomas

SIMON and Garfunkel could not have composed a more lonely railway station setting than that for the smartly dressed man sitting at one end of Southampton Central. Here, last Saturday evening, sat a manager very much alone with his thoughts.

Roy Hodgson's ticket for his destination was taking him nowhere more romantic than Croydon but this was a more disappointing journey than most for Blackburn's much-travelled manager. He was making a dignified retreat from the venue where his team's championship pursuit had effectively terminated.

Hodgson, however, is in good company in being defeated by a Southampton side brimming with new expectations, fuelled by another man who increasingly looks worthy of at least a commendation when it comes to Premiership Manager of the Year. In less than two months David Jones's team have humbled Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea.

The ambitious Jones will not settle for a highly respectable 11th place — "Now we're there, I want us to be higher; I'm a bit greedy" — but Hodgson will settle for any place in Europe. As for the biggest prize, the Premiership title, he admits: "It's going to take a minor miracle to overtake Manchester United."



Egil Ostenstad scores Southampton's first goal PHOTO: MATTHEW ASHTON

Realism weighed heavily on Glenn Hoddle's thoughts, too, as he checked a clutch of fringe players for France 98. He must have left The Dell with a higher impression of Matthew Le Tissier, whose purposeful performance mirrored the team's and was all the better for his claim that he did not know the national coach was watching. Sadly for Blackburn — if not for Hoddle — England refusenik Chris Sutton (a virus) was not present.

Hoddle can enter in his dossier that Le Tissier, so often seemingly the detached drifter of The Dell, is lighter by half a stone after a new diet, and hungrier. He helped Egil Ostenstad to the Norwegian's curious first goal, which looked a country mile offside, and provided a shoal of unaccepted ones for David Hirst, who finally scored emphatically after Colin Hendry appeared to be pushed and Jeff Kenna unaccountably fell over.

Hodgson justifiably complained about those two goals but, equally correctly, blamed his team for dire defending for the third. Richard Dryden hoofed hopefully upfield, Hendry misread the bounce and Ostenstad confidently rounded Tim Flowers.

It was another day for Blackburn to forget, following an identical defeat at home to Tottenham. That was arguably the freak Premiership result of the season; this, at the hands of a vibrant Southampton, was unquestionably not.

Hodgson knew the reasons but did not voice them. Instead Jones said everything for him: "We closed them down, shut them out all over the pitch. We scurried, we worked hard." But is that not mainly what has underpinned Blackburn's resurgence this season?

Blackburn offer more than that: they are a well organised, intelligent team in their manager's image. In Damien Duff, Hodgson knows he has a rare teenage talent: pace, quick feet and the self-belief that distinguishes the outstanding. But the winger had no Sutton or, after 68 minutes, Martin Dahlin to aim for. The Swedish striker closed his first starting appearance in four months by walking off, seemingly without word or gesture to the dug-out, when he was substituted.

Hodgson has seen it all before, but said Dahlin had "not shown solidarity with his colleagues". Perhaps they will not be colleagues too much longer. Jones, for his part, attempted to put to rest fears over two of his strikers after a week of renewed speculation about Ostenstad and the injured leading scorer Kevin Davies. He put a high price tag on both.

Football results

FA CARLING PREMIERSHIP:
Arsenal 1, Crystal Palace 0; Bolton Wanderers 1, West Ham Utd 1; Coventry City 1, Barnsley 0; Leicester City 2, Chelsea 0; Liverpool 1, Everton 1; Manchester Utd 2, Derby 0; Newcastle Utd 1, Leeds Utd 1; Sheffield Wed 1, Tottenham 0; Southampton 3, Blackburn Rovers 0.
Leading positions: 1, Man Utd (played 27, points 56); 2, Arsenal (25-47); 3, Liverpool (27-47).

NATIONWIDE LEAGUE:
Division One: Birminghm 2, Sheff Utd 0; Bradford C 0, Oxford 0; Huddersfld 1, Wolves 0; Ipswich 5, Norwich 0; Middlesbro 3, Sunderlnd 1; QPR 0, Port Vale 1; Reading 0, Portsmth 1; Stockport 3, Charlton 0; Stoke 1, Nottm For 1; Swindon 1, Man City 3; Tranmere 0, Crewe 3; WBA 1, Bury 1.
Leading positions: 1, Middlesbrough (32-65); 2, Nottm Forest (32-64); 3, Sunderland (31-58).

Division Two: Bristol R 3, Oldham 1; Burnley 1, Brentford 1; Chesterfld 3, Wrexham 1; Fulham 2, Wigan 0; Gillingham 1, Carlisle 0; Grimsby 2, Bournemth 1; Luton 0, Bristol City 0; Millwall 0, Northmptn 0; Preston 1, Wycombe 1; Southend 2, Blackpool 1; Walsall 0, Plymouth 1; York 1, Watford 1.
Leading positions: 1, Watford (32-64); 2, Bristol City (33-62); 3, Northampton (33-52).

Division Three: Cardiff 0, Cambridge 0; Chester 4, Rotherham 0; Doncaster 0, Torquay 1; Exeter 0, Colchester 1; Hull 2, Sc'thorpe 1; Leyton O 2, Swansea 2; Lincoln 2, Barnet 0; Mansfield 4, Darlington 0; Notts Co 1, Scarboro 0; Peterboro 0, Macclesfld 1; Rochdale 2, Brighton 0; Shrewsbry 1, Hartlepool 0.
Leading positions: 1, Notts Co (33-72); 2, Macclesfield (33-58); 3, Torquay (33-56)

BELL'S SCOTTISH LEAGUE:
Premier Division: Celtic 4, Kilmarnk 0; Dunfrmline 2, Dundee U 2; Hibernian 1, Rangers 2; Motherwell 2, Hearts 4; St Johnstn 0, Aberdeen 1.
Leading positions: 1, Rangers (25-52); 2, Celtic (25-52); 3, Hearts (25-52).

First Division: Ayr 1, Stirling A 0; Dundee 1, Airdrie 0; Morton 3, Raith 1; Partick 0, Falkirk 0.
Leading positions: 1, Dundee (25-50); 2, Raith (25-42); 3, Falkirk (25-42).

Second Division: Clydebank 2, Brechin 1; Forfar 1, East Fife 0; Stenhsmr 2, Queen Sth 0; Stranraer 3, Clyde 0; Invrnss CT 2, Livingston 2.
Leading positions: 1, Clydebank (24-47); 2, Livingston (23-40); 3, Queen of Sth (24-35).

Third Division: Berwick 1, Alloa 1; Cowdnbth 2, Dumbarton 0; E Stirling 1, Ross Co 0; Montrose 1, Albion 3; Queens Pk 0, Arbroath 2.
Leading positions: 1, Alloa (23-44); 2, Arbroath (24-43); 3, E Stirling (25-41).

Sports Diary Shiv Sharma

Coach Vialli is on the fast track

GIANLUCA VIALLI, leading by energetic example in his first game as player-manager of Chelsea following the abrupt departure of Ruud Gullit, took the club to their third League Cup final when his side defeated Arsenal 3-1 in the second leg of the Coca-Cola Cup semi-final at Stamford Bridge.

The Gunners held a 2-1 advantage from the opening leg, but it was cancelled out by an early goal from Mark Hughes before two more in three minutes, from Roberto Di Matteo and Dan Petrescu early in the second half, set up Chelsea for a 4-3 aggregate victory. Dennis Bergkamp replied with a late penalty.

The rugged, rumbustious tie brought nine yellow cards and one red — Patrick Vieira's sending-off left Arsène Wenger's team considerably weakened — from referee Graham Poll. In the final on March 29, Chelsea's opponents at Wembley will be Middlesbrough, whom they defeated in the final of the FA Cup last season. Bryan Robson's side reached the final for the second consecutive year by beating Liverpool 2-0 on the night and 3-2 on aggregate.

Two goals in a startling first three minutes, from Paul Merson and Middlesbrough's latest import Marco Branca, ultimately proved to be enough for them to win the tie.

ENGLAND scored the 38 runs they needed to win the nerve-racking third Test by three wickets against the West Indies in Trinidad — the same margin with which they had lost the second on a nearby pitch. The final day's play was delayed by 40 minutes because of rain. Mark Butcher played confidently and with Graham Thorpe added another 14 priceless runs before Thorpe fell to Curtly Ambrose. Jack Russell and Andy Caddick were dismissed in successive balls, leaving seven required at the lunch interval.

Butcher and Dean Headley kept their cool to reach the 225 target, levelling the series 1-1 with three Tests to play. Angus Fraser's bowling earned him the Man of the Match award.

Mike Atherton's men followed up their Test victory with a tour match in Georgetown against Guyana, which ended in a draw.

England A's winter tour meanwhile ended on a disappointing note when, already down 2-0 in the one-day series to Sri Lanka A, they lost the final game by 41 runs in Matara. However, Nick Knight's team can take some comfort from the fact that they won the unofficial Test series 2-0.

A COLOURFUL ceremony followed by a spectacular fireworks display brought the Winter Olympics to a close in Nagano, Japan. Germany topped the medals' table with 29, including 12 golds, closely followed by Norway, who picked up 25 medals. At the other end of the scale were Australia, Belgium and Great Britain, with one bronze each.

BOB DWYER was sacked as Leicester's director of rugby. He was shown the door through a combination of player power and a failure to build on last season's success when the club won the Pilkington Cup and reached the Heineken Cup final. The Australian, appointed in 1996, is replaced by former club captain and England No 8 Dean Richards.

THE former Scotland international footballer, Lou Macari, faces financial ruin after losing a legal battle against Celtic over a claim that he was unfairly dismissed as manager. Macari accused Celtic of breach of contract when it sacked him without notice in June 1994, and sought $700,000 damages. The 48-year-old Scot now faces a $800,000 legal bill.

KEN TYRRELL quit the Formula One racing team he founded in 1960 after a clash with British American Racing, which purchased the company for $30 million three months ago. BAR's decision to sign the Brazilian driver Ricardo Rosset in preference to Tyrrell's nominee, Jos Verstappen, was cited as the reason behind the split.

The future of the Belgian Grand Prix, threatened by restrictions on tobacco sponsorship, was secured after the Walloon regional parliament agreed to unrestricted sponsorship of world-level sporting and cultural events.

THE 6,670-mile leg of the Whitbread Round The World Race, from Auckland to São Sebastião, was won by EF Language, skippered by Paul Cayard. The victory puts Cayard almost 100 points clear at the top of the table — a big enough margin for him to suffer even a demasting on one of the remaining legs and still win the race overall.

Tennis

Rusedski top in battle of the blasters

Stephen Bierley in Antwerp

GREG RUSEDSKI, Britain's No 1, defeated Switzerland's Marc Rosset 7-6, 3-6, 6-1, 6-4 in the final of the prosaically named European Community Championship here last Sunday.

The world's new number 5 succeeded where Tim Henman failed at the same stage against the same opponent last year, further emphasising the gulf separating the two British players. It was Rusedski's sixth Tour title.

Rusedski dented Rosset's hopes of claiming a diamond-studded golden racket-shaped trophy on offer to anyone who wins the event three times in five years. However, the Swiss, who at 6ft 7in is one of the few players to loom above Rusedski, still has two years in which to gain the victory that will secure the diamonds.

His game, like Rusedski's, is underpinned by a huge serve and supported by a sometimes withering forehand, although on this occasion neither weapon was consistently dangerous.

Rusedski had beaten Rosset for the first time in three meetings on his way to the Croatian Indoor final last month, where



Rusedski . . . upwardly mobile

he lost to Goran Ivanisevic, and both men were anxious to gain an early advantage.

On a fairly slow indoor court, Rusedski had struggled all week to impose his serve, and Rosset forced three break points in the third game, but it was a measure of the British player's expanding resolve and maturity that he saved the lot.

Then it was Rosset's turn to struggle, but he demonstrated his own competitive edge by recovering from 0-40 down in the next game. And so to the near-inevitable first-set tie-break in which Rusedski gained the edge when he returned what appeared to be an over-hit Rosset serve just inside the line.

Rosset, who has an impressive record against the world's top 10 players, levelled immediately, breaking Rusedski's serve for the first and only time.

An early break of the Rosset serve in the fourth set and five successive games gave Rusedski a clear sight of the title. There was a crisis in the fourth game when he slumped to 0-40, but then Rusedski let full rip on his serve and Rosset was effectively finished.

Rugby Union Five Nations Championship: England 60 Wales 26

England on the rampage

Robert Armstrong at Twickenham

ONE record-breaking victory may not turn a promising side into a great one but England's astonishing eight-try rout does prove beyond reasonable doubt that they are still masters in their own backyard.

Fears that Lawrence Dallaglio's side had gone soft in their traditional area of dominance, the forwards, proved wholly unfounded. This hard, swaggering England pack gave the backs all the bullets to fire they needed as well as serving notice that the Triple Crown looks certain to remain at Twickenham.

England have not beaten any side of genuine quality since the 1995 World Cup, yet they demolished Wales with the insouciance of men who have grown accustomed to causing mayhem on many battlefields.

In fact, it was their first victory in eight matches — and their first since Clive Woodward became coach — offering further proof that international rugby has become a kind of perverse lottery. England's 60-point total was the biggest Five Nations score since the championship began in 1910.

The instinctive freedom England displayed as they blitzed the hapless Welsh with a bewildering variety of attacking ploys suggests Woodward may be succeeding in his mission to transform the style of England rugby before next year's World Cup. At times David Rees, Matt Perry and Austin Healey threaded their way through the Wales defence rather like Pacific Islanders on the rampage in the Hong Kong Sevens. The culture change was awesome.

Table

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	2	2	0	0	75	33	4
England	2	1	0	1	77	50	2
Scotland	2	1	0	1	33	67	2
Ireland	1	0	0	1	16	17	0
Wales	1	0	0	1	26	60	0

But nothing Woodward required from an England side strong in potential but weak in terms of results would have materialised without a crushing demonstration of the arts and crafts of forward play. As he admitted: "Our forwards were outstanding — people like Garath Archer and Martin Johnson enabled us to play the game we wanted to. The whole pack just wanted to get going."

Exactly what this result indicates about the current status of the championship is perhaps less encouraging. All the evidence, including the Murrayfield result, points to an ever-widening gap in standards between England and France and the Celtic nations.

The entry of Italy into the competition cannot come quickly enough: fresh stimulation is urgently needed to gee up Wales, Scotland and Ireland, who are in danger of becoming also-rans.

Significantly Woodward was more eager to discuss the reasons for England's recent defeat by France than to celebrate their tour de force against the less-than-formidable Welsh. When England travel to Murrayfield on March 22, Scotland will be doing Five Nations rugby a major service if they manage to keep the outcome in doubt until the final 20 minutes. Another runaway England win would merely confirm the southern hemisphere nations in their view that this event has become the Two Nations Championship.

Under Greenwood: Wales flanker Colin Charvis is helpless as England's Will-o'-the-wisp flies between the posts PHOTO: MARK LEECH

Certainly England can look forward to developing the confidence that goes with winning before they embark on a demanding summer tour to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, which includes four Tests. They finish with a home game against Ireland.

If Woodward becomes more consistent in his team selection after using 31 players since November, then the main structure of his World Cup side should be in place by the start of next season.

"We have to keep our feet on the ground after this win — I am sure we will," said John Mitchell, the New Zealand coach who got England's forwards up to speed. "It was a collective effort. We had the right attitude and we got back to basics. The referee Colin Hawke helped to make it a great game of rugby by keeping things simple. He was fantastic." Hawke, also from New Zealand, operated the advantage law with notable intelligence.

In retrospect it is hard to believe that Wales scored two tries and led 12-6 before England began to get their act together. When England's response did come it was both chilling and, for Wales, demoralising: a three-try salvo within a six-minute period, followed by a driven try by Dallaglio on the stroke of half-time, then four second-half tries, three of them within 16 minutes, that stretched the lead to a remarkable 41 points.

As often as not the work-hungry Rees was the catalyst for England's rapidly unfolding pattern of attack. He dragged bemused defenders out of position with his searing midfield breaks and popped up in all parts of the field to support the ball carrier.

Perry, too, stamped his authority after a shaky start in which he gifted a try to Allan Bateman: the Bath full-back demonstrated the pace and the panache that ultimately helped to dismantle a creaky Wales rearguard.

It was little wonder that Woodward, who has come under critical fire for his tactics, basked in the knowledge that England had, after all, done it his way. "I just knew that we would put the losing Paris experience behind us," he said. "If you have forwards who can dominate and such talented backs, you must score tries — we had both factors. Although many of the Welsh backs have great reputations I would not swap any of our players for theirs." Quite so.

Scotland 16 France 51

French crush sad Scotland

Ian Malin at Murrayfield

SCOTLAND's pairing with Brazil in the round-ball version of the World Cup this summer may have raised many a hollow laugh. But Scotland taking on the world in the oval-ball game now looks even more presumptuous. In the last three months they have shipped 156 points in three games here against Australia, South Africa and now the Grand Slam champions elect. No wonder the saltires were at half-mast in Edinburgh last Sunday.

The mood at Murrayfield after this win by France, which makes the victors virtual certainties for their first back-to-back Grand Slam, was one of despair.

France looked to have more men on the pitch. "They seemed to have three or four more players than we had and, when they moved the ball wide, it was difficult to defend against them," said Scotland's Gary Armstrong. France out-scored his team 7-1 on tries. Bravely as Scotland played, it could have been more.

Jim Telfer, the Scotland coach, also put on a brave show. He admitted: "We don't have a magic wand. There may be cries for some of the A team to be promoted, but in truth this was the best side we could have fielded.

"We have a tremendous struggle now because there is a limit to the numbers of quality players available. France have a highly competitive structure and a core of 150,000-200,000 players. And this French side is playing to its potential."

The French were faster by yards, stronger in the tackle, more inventive and more imaginative; a complete team. They dazzled Scotland with their artistry. Painting the boldest strokes was the Brive flanker Olivier Magne. He showed the speed of a sprinter and the deft handling of a basketball player.

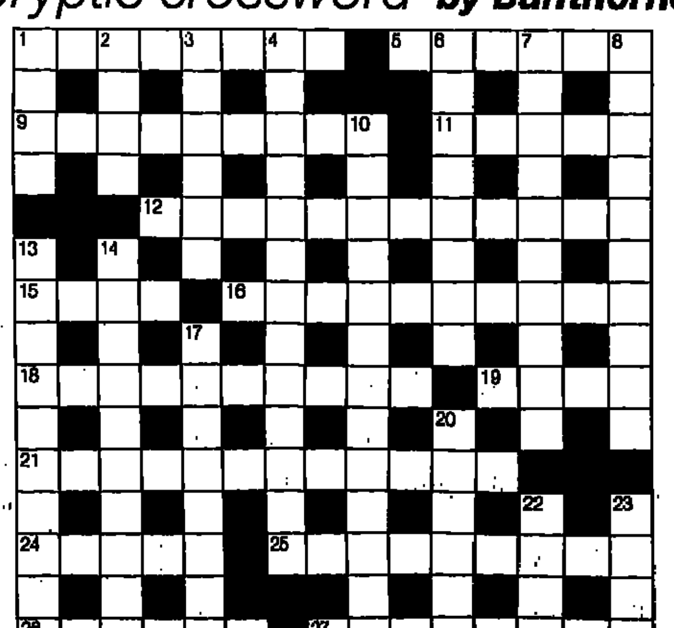
Their third try summed up his contribution and the game itself. Fabien Pelous skimmed the ball off the top of a line-out and France moved the ball wide to where Magne flung out a long pass to Philippe Bernat-Salles. In one movement the wing snatched the ball from over his head and swept outside Kenny Logan and Armstrong from Scotland's 22 to touch down.

France at last have unearthed a pair of half-backs who can allow those greyhounds behind the scrum to spring from their traps. Philippe Carbonneau was imperious at scrum-half and Thomas Castaignède explosive outside him.

France weathered the early Scottish storm and by and large kept their discipline. The exceptions were when Magne received a yellow card for a late shoulder charge on Derrick Lee and Franck Tournaire appeared to kick Peter Walton in a mêlée.

They were isolated dark deeds by this luminous French side, and Ireland and Wales will surely be powerless to stop them winning a sixth Grand Slam.

Cryptic crossword by Bunthorne



Across

1 Fall from grace so couldn't be countenanced (4,4)
5 See 12
9 Curious issue of a vehicle for Fanny Brice (5,4)
11 Long and thick, hitting Indian heads with this (5)
12, 3, 5 Intelligent life found by CID: judge there's only one left in this weird phenomenon (12,6,6)
15 Photograph of the Unknown Soldier unknown (1-3)
16 Via indigenous spaghetti junctions here? (10)
18 Death for canal creation (3-7)
19 Bloody fool (4)
21 August month our *idée fixe!* (4-8)
24 Italian revolutionary made name with nine others (5)
25 Cut between Beaune or Nuits? (9)
26 Turning on old silk; a year's hard labour down under (6)
27 Fancy a bit of an Israeli melon? This smells of almonds! (8)

Down

1, 13 I feel groggy, sounding cross and oddly peccant. Why? Tell me! How long have I got? (4-10)
2, 22 Confess one had lied at this get-together (8)
3 See 12
4 Church guild members put on one hop in aid of youth (5,8)
6 One threw offensive material (Get this!) into Welsh Water (8)
7 Old Church involved in tribal warfare: is it worth salvation? (10)
8 Not a principal Lib-Dem? (5,5)
10 One's field contour finely balanced (4,2,7)
13 See 1 down
14 Unbridled pence and income distribution (10)
17 Distress the king in a seat at Versailles (8)
20 Boring banker? (6)
22 See 2
23 Vocal entertainer in the wings! (4)

Last week's solution

